AN

ESSAY

ON THE

NATURAL EQUALITY OF MEN, &c.

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ON THE

NATURAL EQUALITY OF MEN;

ON

THE RIGHTS THAT RESULT FROM IT, AND ON THE DUTIES WHICH IT IMPOSES:

To which a SILVER MEDAL was adjudged by the TEYLERIAN SOCIETY at Haarlem, April 1792.

CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

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Aliquid semper ad communem utilitatem afferendum. CICERO.

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PREFACE.

WHOEVER has attentively conſidered the ſeries of queſtions propoſed for public diſcuſſion by the Teylerian Society, will acknowledge that they have uſually had the peculiar advantage of uniting curious inveſtigation with general utility. But, of all the queſtions propoſed by this, or by any literary ſociety whatever, none appears either of greater conſequence in itſelf, or, from the complexion of the times, more likely to excite attention, than that which is now offered, by this reſpectable body,

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as the ſubject of competition for the literary honour which they annually confer. It directly leads to examine the principal foundations of civil ſociety, to unfold the chief obligations of all ſocial duties, to eſtabliſh the important advantages of ſubordination, on the one hand, and, on the other, to guard againſt the dreadful and odious conſequences both of deſpotiſm and of anarchy. Such are the momentous conſiderations neceſſarily connected with the proper diſcuſſion of this queſtion; the propoſal of which does equal honour to the diſcernment and public ſpirit of the worthy Directors of the Teylerian Inſtitution. Happy may the perſon account himſelf, and juſtly will he be entitled to the thanks

thanks of his fellow men, who ſhall be enabled to treat this ſubject in any manner adequate to its real conſequence and dignity. Far, indeed, is the writer of this Eſſay from preſuming to lay claim to this praiſe. But he feels his heart impreſſed by the importance of the ſubject, and animated with a warm deſire of contributing to the public good that portion which his ſmall abilities may permit. Ever ſince he was capable of any rational reflection, he has found his ſoul actuated by the ſacred flame of liberty, by an abhorrence of oppreſſion, and by that love of juſtice which dictates an equal enjoyment of all the rights of human nature. The grand principle of the natural equality of men,

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if rightly underſtood, is the only baſis on which univerſal juſtice, order, and freedom, can be firmly built, and permanently ſecured. The view exhibited in this Eſſay, ſo far from looſening the bands of ſociety, or weakening that ſubordination, without which no government can ſubſiſt, will draw more cloſely every ſocial tie, and more ſtrongly confirm the obligations of legal obedience, and the rights of legal authority.

The writer is ſufficiently aware that the principles which he attempts to unfold, will not be agreeable either to the wild enthuſiaſts for liberty, or to the ſervile and tyrannical abettors of arbitrary power. That moderation,

tion, which flows from the love and the perception of truth (which commonly lies between two extremes) is ſeldom acceptable to the multitude, who, incapable of diſtinguiſhing the uſe from the abuſe of things, are generally as extravagant and impetuous in the maintenance of right, as in the abetment of wrong. It is only the few, who have ſhaken off the ſhackles of prejudice, diſpelled the clouds of paſſion, and burſt from the dungeon in which they confine the ſoul, that can view and reliſh objects as they appear in the pure and ſteady light in which nature exhibits them. The eyes of the reſt of mankind are either too weak to ſuſtain its luſtre, or, if they have beheld it for ſome time,

become ſo much dazzled as to loſe ſight of the objects which it is deſigned to unfold to them, and are thus deprived of that direction in conduct which it ought to afford. Of the truth of this aſſertion, the times in which we live furniſh abundant and melancholy examples.

Since the generality of mankind, then, will ever be in extremes, and the wiſer few, if they keep themſelves free from the contagion of popular prejudice and paſſion, will, from this very circumſtance, ſeldom acquire any great influence over the general conduct; it may be aſked, of what uſe can ſuch writings be, which the multitude will either not read, or not apply

ply to profit, and the more intelligent do not require? To this queſtion the anſwer is obvious:—that the progreſs of truth is ſure, though ſlow; that, if every perſon of diſcernment and moderation would conſider it as his duty to communicate, as far as his ſphere may extend, the light he himſelf has acquired, a great deal of good might at laſt be accompliſhed; and that to contribute any portion, however ſmall, to the common benefit, is both a ſufficient motive and a ſufficient reward to a benevolent and generous mind. The human ſoul is formed for truth and virtue. Error, prejudice, and depravity, are unnatural ſtates. Superſtition and bigotry, popular frenzy, or deſpotic oppreſſion,

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never can be deſtined by the Supreme Director of the world to hold a perpetual reign, becauſe they counteract his wiſe and benevolent deſigns. The paſſions, and the conſequent agitations which they excite, as they are violent, can never be laſting, and, from their very violence itſelf, tend, by a ſpecies of fermentation, to throw off the dregs of ignorance and folly, which obſtruct the improvement of our ſpecies. Theſe convulſions may be compared to tempeſts and hurricanes which overcaſt the ſky with a temporary gloom, and often occaſion the moſt dreadful calamities; but, in the end, refine the atmoſphere, and preſerve its ſalubrity. It is more natural to ſuppoſe that the progreſs of the

world

world is towards improvement and perfection, than, as gloomy but contracted minds are apt to fancy, towards degeneracy and ruin. Even the final deſtruction of this globe, which Scripture teaches us to expect, will only ſerve to introduce a more perfect and glorious ſcene. The times in which we live, though agitated with violent convulſions, and marked by ſtriking events, are peculiarly favourable to rational inquiry and to ſubſtantial improvement. On the public affairs of the world, it has often been ſaid that the ſpeculations of philoſophers in their cloſets have but little influence. But ſuch an opinion can be adopted by thoſe only who are as great ſtrangers to experience as

they

they are to ſpeculation. The conduct of men is commonly directed by their opinions. Their opinions are formed by their principles; their principles, by the inſtruction which they receive, by the books which they read, by the company which they frequent. Hence it is eaſy to ſee how far the public opinions and conduct muſt, in a literary age, be affected by the writings that appear in it. If theſe are dictated by ſoundneſs of judgment, and benignity of heart, they cannot fail of producing much benefit.

The time, therefore, and pains employed in ſpeculations ſuch as are ſuggeſted by the important queſtion I now propoſe to diſcuſs, cannot be miſ-ſpent,

miſ-ſpent, if the ſubject is treated with any tolerable degree of accuracy and preciſion. Even thoſe who fail of ſucceſs may ſtill claim the honour of a laudable attempt; and from men of ſuch judgment and candour as characteriſe thoſe to whom I have the honour of addreſſing this diſcourſe, are ſure of obtaining it. Without detaining the attention of my candid readers any longer from the immediate conſideration of the queſtion now before them, I ſhall directly proceed to examine it. As it ſtands propoſed by the Society, it divides itſelf into three parts:

I. In what reſpects may men be ſaid to be equal?

II.

II. What are the rights resulting from this equality?

III. What are the duties which it impoſes?

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BOOK I.

In what Senſe may all Men be ſaid to be Equal?

CHAP. I.

Of Natural Diverſities Among Men.

THAT all men are, by nature, equal, is an opinion ſo generally received among thoſe who are accuſtomed to any degree of philoſophical reflection, that to call it in queſtion might appear abſurd, and to prove it, ſuperfluous. Yet, this opinion, like many general maxims which

obtain a currency in the world, however true it may be, in its proper ſenſe, is not, I am inclined to believe, ſufficiently founded according to the acceptation of the greateſt part of thoſe who admit it. If it is underſtood in any ſenſe, excluſive of all natural ſuperiority and diſtinction among men, it will be found to contradict univerſal experience. At whatever period of human life, in whatever ſtate or condition of ſociety, we contemplate our ſpecies, we ſhall find that nature has diſtinguiſhed individuals from each other, by peculiar and appropriate qualities, almoſt as remarkably, in ſome inſtances, as ſhe has diſtinguiſhed the human race from the inferior creatures. Thoſe philoſophers, who, in order to exalt themſelves, attempt to degrade their ſpecies, and diſplay their eloquence by defending the moſt irrational paradoxes, are eager to perſuade us that,

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as human nature, in its original ſtate, is on a level with the brutes, ſo individuals among mankind derive every difference of corporeal and mental perfection that characterizes them, wholly from the opportunities of improvement which they have enjoyed, or from the happy ſituations in which they have been placed. Contradicting univerſal experience, they ſtrive to refer the judgments, which it eſtabliſhes, to the claſs of popular prejudices; and, pretending to lead us to the true knowledge of human nature, exhibit to our view a ſtate of brutiſh ignorance, and of ſavage ferocity, which has never exiſted but in their own imaginations. They carry us back to a period of which there are no monuments, and in which they conſider man not as a ſocial, but as a ſolitary, animal, actuated by mere animal inſtincts, deſtitute of ideas, a mere quadruped grazing

ing along with the brutes, and as little diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of his ſpecies by individual qualities, as his ſpecies from the other inhabitants of the foreſt. In order to eſtabliſh this theory, ſo diſgraceful to human nature, they produce certain relations of travellers concerning Pongos, and Enjokos, and Ourang-Outangs, whom they conclude to be primitive men, whoſe conduct and mode of life can alone furniſh us with juſt repreſentations of our original condition*. So eaſy is it, when a favourite opinion is to be maintained, or a paradox eſtabliſhed, to adopt, as principles,

* See Rouſſeau, ſur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inegalité parmi les hommes. Note 10th. This fiction appears to be copied from ancient writers. See Lucretius, l. v. verſe 923. Horace, ſerm. lib. 1. Sat. 3. verſe 98. Cicero pro Sextio, c. 42. De inventione, lib. 1. c. 2. Lactant. div. inſt. lib. 6. c. 10. Hobbes de cive, c. viii. ſection 1.

ciples, judgments deſtitute of all evidence, and to reject principles ſanctioned by univerſal conſent. So apt are the enemies of ſyſtem to run into ſyſtems of their own, whoſe ſole recommendation is ſingularity, while ingenious ſophiſtry is their only ſupport.

Thoſe writers ſeem not to have reflected, that, if man was originally a brute, he muſt ever have continued ſo; and that that inſtinct, which ſolely they allow to him in that ſituation, if it is unerring within its preſcribed compaſs, never can, by any improvement, be carried one ſtep beyond its primitive limits. That capacity of perfection, which they grant to him, as his only diſtinction above the inferior animals, implies, in its very nature, more elevated and extenſive powers, than any of theſe can poſſeſs. To deny this,

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is to aſſert, that a building may be erected without a foundation, an elegant and beautiful form exhibited without original materials, an effect produced without a cauſe. Theſe writers ſeem to overlook the whole analogy of nature, in which every ſpecies is diſtinguiſhed from every other, by properties common to all of the ſame claſs, while all the individuals of each ſpecies are characteriſed by their peculiar qualities. It would be equally abſurd to think of forming a man out of a brute, as to imagine that a fiſh may be transformed into a quadruped.

Thoſe, however, who ſeek not fame, but wiſdom, not brilliancy, but truth, will, in all their inquiries concerning human nature, take the human ſpecies as they find it exhibited, in its various forms, by daily obſervation, by the incorrupted

corrupted records of hiſtory, and by the authentic relations of travellers. Beyond theſe ſources of information they will not pretend to go in queſt of ſtates of human nature, which are only to be found in the pictures of poets, or in the hypotheſes of philoſophers equally fanciful; and they will conſider it as no leſs ridiculous for any one to philoſophiſe on man with an Ourang-Outang before him, than it would be, for a perſon, attempting to determine the qualities of gold, to reject an undoubted piece of that metal, and begin his experiments with a piece of pinchbeck. For, as a ſtatue, however elegantly finiſhed, ſtill contains the rude maſs of marble, on which ſo much ſymetry and beauty has been ſuperinduced; ſo, man, in the moſt civiliſed ſtate of ſociety, ſtill retains the original principles of his nature on which all the vari-

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ous modifications, he has undergone, have been ingrafted. It is the buſineſs of the philoſopher to diſcover theſe amidſt all the adventitious circumſtances, with which they may be connected, or the various ſhapes and colourings, which they may have aſſumed. No human purſuit, no human inſtitution, no human enjoyment, no human corruption itſelf, but may be ultimately referred to ſome original principle of our nature; and, without theſe original principles, it is impoſſible to account for the power of education, of habit, and of example.—If, laying aſide all regard to imaginary ſtates of human nature, in which none of the principles, which now ſo powerfully influence our ſpecies, are ſuppoſed to have unfolded themſelves, we fix our attention on mankind as they are exhibited to us in hiſtory, and, by daily obſervation,

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there is one important fact, which muſt occur to every one endowed with the ſmalleſt reflection. This fact, on which I mean chiefly to found my reaſonings on the whole of this ſubject, is, that, however ſimilar the ſpecies may be in general, an infinite diverſity of abilities, talents, and character, obtains among the individuals that compoſe it.

This diverſity is evident with regard both to the body, and to the mind. In ſome, we behold great bodily ſtrength and dexterity, and a peculiar aptitude for mechanical operations, and for rapid and powerful movements. In others, the powers of imagination conſpicuouſly unfold themſelves; while judgment, acuteneſs, penetration, and ſagacity, in the conduct of life, diſtinguiſh another claſs of men. An uncommon clearneſs and energy of intel-

lect, and an aptitude for the abſtract ſciences, raiſe others above the common level. Some have an aſtoniſhing faculty of perſuaſion, of addreſs, and management in moving the affections, and influencing the conduct of their fellow men.

Nor is this diverſity leſs remarkable in the moral qualities of men, than in their corporeal and intellectual powers. Some have a wonderful command of their own paſſions, and can preſerve their moderation and compoſure of ſoul amidſt the greateſt provocations, and the moſt trying calamities; others are deprived of all ſelf-government by the ſlighteſt adverſity, or by the ſmalleſt oppoſition. Some natures are extremely ſympathetic, and eaſily moved by the diſtreſſes of their fellow men; while others diſcover an aſtoniſhing inſenſibility with regard not only to the afflictions

flictions of other perſons, but even to their own. Benevolence, and all the gentle and amiable qualities which accompany it, peculiarly diſtinguiſh ſome characters; while fortitude, and magnanimity, and all the ſtern and awful virtues, are the leading features of ſome elevated ſpirits. Not to mention the characteriſtical marks of ambition, avarice, voluptuouſneſs, indolence, or vanity, which diverſify ſuch a number of individuals, it is certain that the moral complexion of men is as various as their corporeal conſtitution, or their mental faculties, and perhaps is greatly influenced by both.

Nor can it be alledged that theſe diſtinctions of character are entirely derived from the preſent ſtate of ſociety, and from different opportunities of cultivation; and by no means referable to any original

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bent of nature. This concluſion will not be authoriſed either by the inductions of reaſon, or by experience. For, in the firſt place, it is hard to be conceived how any combination of circumſtances, or any influence of education and habit, can produce any power or propenſity, of which the original ſeeds have not been dropped into the conſtitution by the hand of the Creator. All that ſituation and opportunity can effectuate, is to furniſh theſe inherent powers and propenſities with the means of unfolding themſelves, of increaſing in vigour, and of acquiring maturity. If they are entirely wanting, they will never be implanted by any effort of human ſkill, or be brought into action, by any favourable combination of circumſtances. If they exiſt in any degree, however ſmall, opportunity, exerciſe, and cultivation, will advance them to a pitch of ſtrength ſo greatly

greatly above their primitive condition, as will have the appearance of a real creation. If we attend to the fact itſelf, it muſt be evident that children and ſavages, who have received no inſtruction, ſhow varieties of character, as well as men who have enjoyed all the advantages of poliſhed ſociety, and who move in its different ſpheres. Although a proneneſs to imitation is univerſally predominant in childhood, yet the manner of imitating, and the objects to which it is directed, are infinitely diverſified. As ſoon as the faculties begin to unfold, all the paſſions and propenſities that belong to human nature imperceptibly ariſe, and, according as the one or the other of theſe is moſt prevalent, characteriſtical features diſtinguiſh the infant. The objects that engage the attention of the ſavage, and the deſires that animate his purſuits, are indeed few, in

compariſon

compariſon of thoſe that exiſt in more po-liſhed ſtates of ſociety. Yet, as theſe concentrate his whole ſoul, ſo they excite its energies the more powerfully within their limited compaſs, and conſpire the more ſpeedily to form his character. In the ſavage ſtate, the genuine impulſes and propenſities of nature are freely allowed to appear, and, collected in one point, exert themſelves with the greater vigour, and give to each individual that peculiar complexion which reſults from the peculiar ſtrength of his native powers *. The multiplicity of objects which attract attention, and ſtimulate activity in more poliſhed periods of ſociety, prevent a character from being ſo ſpeedily formed: While the uniform inſtitutions of civiliſed life mould all the members of the community

* See Robertſon's Hiſt. of America, and Raynal's Hiſtoire Philoſophique et Politique *paſſim*.

munity to mutual reſemblance, and contribute to efface thoſe prominent and characteriſtical features which the hand of nature has impreſſed. I mean not to aſſert that thoſe diverſities of talents and character are wholly to be aſcribed to the unaſſiſted powers of nature; but only that they prevail in the joint proportion of theſe powers, and of the circumſtances that call them into exerciſe. As the fire will ſoon be extinguiſhed, if not conſtantly fed by combuſtibles, and as theſe combuſtibles, however multiplied, will not produce flame, and light, and heat, unleſs they are kindled; ſo the human faculties, if never called into action by correſponding ſituations, will remain torpid and inefficacious; and the moſt favourable concurrence of circumſtances will not produce genius, dexterity, ſagacity, and virtue, if the original ſeeds of all theſe qualities are totally

totally wanting. Be this as it may, it is incontrovertible that there is, among the various individuals that compoſe the human ſpecies, an almoſt infinite diverſity of abilities, temper, and character.

From this circumſtance a natural *inequality* muſt neceſſarily ariſe. Thoſe talents and diſpoſitions, which are the moſt amiable and reſpectable, directly point out their poſſeſſors as the objects of love and eſteem. Wherever ſuch qualities appear, it is as impoſſible for the human mind, unleſs it be moſt deplorably depraved, to withhold its admiration and affection, as it would be for any natural cauſe not to produce its effect when placed in circumſtances adapted to its operation. Every diſplay of genius, of ſagacity, of penetration, and prudence, is calculated to excite the admiration of the beholders, to afford

them

them pleaſure, and, if beneficently directed, to demand their gratitude. Fortitude, magnanimity, and generoſity, command veneration, and excite eſteem. Gentleneſs, moderation, kindneſs, and compaſſion, appearing as the diſtinguiſhing features in any character, cannot fail to attract the love and complacency of all to whom they are known. Even corporeal ſtrength and dexterity procure a certain degree of reſpect to their poſſeſſors, on account of their utility in life both to others and to themſelves.

It is equally certain that reſpect, eſteem, veneration, and love, enſure to thoſe who are the objects of them, a very high degree of influence over the reſt of mankind. Such will be liſtened to, imitated, and obeyed, by all who are capable of eſtimating the qualities above mentioned accord-

ing to their real merit; the luſtre which they ſhed around their poſſeſſors dazzles thoſe whoſe ſouls are leſs diſcerning and elevated; and even the ſtupid and the baſe are conſtrained to pay an involuntary homage. That ſuch qualities are the only original ſources of power and influence, is evident from the conduct of all who aſpire at acquiring conſideration and authority. If they want the reality, they affect the appearance of them, and, even when power alone reduces their fellow men under their ſubjection, they endeavour alſo, if not ſtupified by the habits of tyranny, to engage their eſteem, and to captivate their benevolence, ſenſible that dominion, to which theſe give no ſupport, can never be ſure and laſting. I am far from aſſerting that all power and diſtinction are founded on this natural baſis. Lamentable experience proves the contra-

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ty. But, that reſpectable and amiable qualities are the primitive ſources of authority and pre-eminence, and, when freely allowed to exert themſelves, cannot fail to obtain them, will be as generally acknowledged as it is certain in fact *.

Nature

* Hence it is eaſy to account for monarchies having been almoſt every-where the primitive form of government. As no ſociety could ſubſiſt without ſome directing power, and, as rude and ſavage men were incapable of extending their views to thoſe more complicated ſyſtems which obſervation and experience alone can ſuggeſt and eſtabliſh, it was natural for them to pitch on the ſimpleſt form, which was dictated rather by ſentiment, than by reaſon, and to yield that voluntary obedience to a chief, which their admiration of his ſuperior qualities inſpired. This ſimple form laſted as long as the chief continued to diſplay theſe virtues, and to apply them in ſuch a manner as to conciliate general benevolence.

Nature herſelf, then, has evidently eſtabliſhed unambiguous diſtinctions among men, and produced a very remarkable *inequality* among the individuals of our ſpecies. We may freely aſſert, that, if any mortal conſpicuouſly excelled the reſt of mankind in every poſſible talent and quality, whether corporeal, intellectual, or moral,

lence. But, as ſoon as oppreſſion rendered him an object of hatred, or weakneſs, an object of contempt, the evils experienced, pointed out the neceſſity of ſecuring the public welfare on a firmer baſis than the capricious pleaſure of an individual; and the habits of ſociety ſuggeſted more complicated ſyſtems of government, better adapted to the grand objects of political union. Among boys at ſchool, one diſtinguiſhed by his courage, his ſagacity, or his art, commonly aſſumes the lead, and governs the juvenile community, with a ſway as deſpotic as that of any eaſtern monarch. The caſe is nearly the ſame in all voluntary aſſociations.

moral, which diſtinguiſhes the ſpecies in general, and had every poſſible opportunity of diſplaying this perfection in all its luſtre, he would be raiſed, by nature herſelf, as much above the reſt of his fellow men as they are above the inferior animals, and be as clearly deſigned to lead, and govern them. Or, if all the above mentioned qualities were the peculiar attributes of any given number of men, theſe would be marked out, by divine providence, as a glorious ariſtocracy or ſenate, to preſide over the community to which they belonged. For they would be poſſeſſed of every qualification to diſcern, of every diſpoſition to purſue, and, from the willing homage and obedience of the reſt of mankind, of every power to ſecure, the public good. Or, laſtly, if any human being were inveſted with ſuch ſtrength and agility of body, with ſuch compaſs

compaſs of underſtanding, and with ſuch complete maſtery of his own paſſions, as fully to provide himſelf with every thing neceſſary for his ſubſiſtence, or conducive to his convenience and comfort, and as neither to be expoſed to the injuries of others, nor to be tempted to injure them, nor to be affected by their misfortunes; ſuch a mortal would be perfectly independent of the reſt of mankind; and as he needed nothing from them, ſo he would, in no reſpect whatever, be their debtor.

But ſuch characters as thoſe above deſcribed have never yet exiſted in the world, and indeed never can exiſt. Such an aſſemblage of perfection is not human, but divine.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the Diſtribution of Human Abilities and Talents.

IF we conſider the various talents and modes of excellence of which the human ſpecies is capable, we ſhall acknowledge that neither all theſe, nor any conſiderable number of them, have ever been found united in any one individual; nay, that the higheſt degrees of many of them are incompatible with each other. For, when diſtinguiſhed honours, or extenſive reputation, are acquired by illuſtrious qualities, we are not thence to infer that the perſons, to whom theſe diſtinctions are allotted, ſurpaſs the reſt of mankind in every quality belonging to the ſpecies; but

but only that they have attained ſuperiority in ſuch, as being more uncommon, are, on that account, more admired. Thoſe mechanical arts and inferior virtues, without which human ſociety could not ſubſiſt, attract no admiration, becauſe they are daily exhibited. Yet the moſt illuſtrious of mankind ſtand more in need of the benefits which theſe afford, than their diſtinguiſhed abilities can confer on the humble poſſeſſors of the former. As thoſe endowed with the qualities moſt neceſſary in human life, but of inferior eſtimation, eſpecially ſuch as are diſplayed in mechanical labour and art, cannot, from their occupations themſelves, aſpire at the ſublimer and more elegant abilities which diſtinguiſh others; theſe, on the other hand, muſt remain deſtitute of the more uſeful ones. That leiſure, meditation, and ſtudy, without which the faculties of the mind

mind cannot be perfected, neceſſarily prevent that full exerciſe of the corporeal members, which enſures their higheſt vigour and agility. A fancy uncommonly lively and bright is adverſe to the patient and accurate reſearches of philoſophy, and to the juſt application of the intellect, in the diſcovery and developement of truth, and the improvement of ſcience. That minute attention to calculation, that arithmetical exactneſs, and that conſtant obſervance of the unvarying routine of buſineſs, which are neceſſary to mercantile and oeconomical purſuits, but which preſent no imagery to the mind, are inauſpicious to the more elegant enjoyments of taſte, and to the cultivation of the fine arts. The ſtern and awful virtues ſeldom aſſociate with the gentle and amiable, and, claiming reſpect and veneration, ſeem to diſdain complacency and love. Even ſome

corporeal perfections appear repugnant to others. The moſt robuſt conformation of the members, and the ſtrength it produces, are not eaſily united with great agility, and with delicate refinement in the organs of ſenſe. In a word, it appears to be the intention of nature, that, although the human faculties are various, and capable of being carried to amazing heights of excellence; yet this ſhould ſeldom be accompliſhed, unleſs when uncommon culture and improvement are beſtowed on ſome particular faculty, or, at leaſt, on a few faculties which have a peculiar native ſtrength.

Variety of talents is, therefore, more applicable to the ſpecies than to individuals. The ſeeds of each (as we have above obſerved) are, perhaps, caſt into every individual conſtitution, but the ſoil is differently

rently adapted to them, and that particular power to which it is favourable, ſprings up, and, if properly cultivated, comes to maturity, ſpreads around its branches, and bears abundant fruit. It may be objected, that it ſeems very prepoſterous to ſuppoſe the creator implanting in any conſtitution the principles of powers, which were never deſigned to come to maturity. But, let it be conſidered that, as the different improvements of men depend on various occurrences, and, as mentioned above, the characteriſtical qualities of each individual will be in the united degree of their primitive ſtrength, and of the opportunities of culture; it was neceſſary that the ſeeds of each ſhould be dropped into every human frame, ſo that, when favourable circumſtances concurred, that power which they were beſt calculated to improve might ſpring up and flouriſh, and

and thus as much human excellence might, on the whole, be produced as the human condition would admit. This was, moreover, neceſſary in order to conſtitute that general ſimilarity which characteriſes the ſpecies, and unites them together in the bonds of a common nature.

Be this as it may, it is undoubted that thoſe who aim at diſtinction, or even at moderate degrees of excellence in a great variety of objects, generally exhibit a ridiculous figure; after having waſted their time, exhauſted their powers, and ſuperinduced on their minds habits of inconſtancy and fickleneſs. Even the greateſt geniuſes, when they leave that particular track, in which indulgent nature had provided them with unfading laurels, and endeavour to invade the province, and ſnatch the rewards of others, while they preſent,

on

on the one hand, the moſt aſtoniſhing inſtances of the ſtrength of the human mind, afford, on the other, no leſs convincing proofs of its weakneſs and vanity *. Hence the neceſſity of each individual devoting himſelf to ſome favourite and uſeful purſuit, to which every other ſhould be ſubſervient, and of applying to the diligent diſcharge of the duties of that department in which he can produce the greateſt benefit to mankind, and acquire the greateſt honour to himſelf.

From what has been ſaid in this and the preceding chapter, it appears, in the *firſt* place, That nature herſelf has eſtabliſhed clear and certain diſtinctions among men, in the various qualities allotted to each individual, and in the various opportunities

* This might be illuſtrated by many examples of a fooliſh affectation of univerſality of genius.

portunities furniſhed them in the courſe of life for their improvement. Theſe opportunities may occur, though in inferior degrees, in the rudeſt as well as in the moſt poliſhed ſtates of ſociety. It is evident, *ſecondly*, That theſe diſtinctions comprehend not the perfection of all the human powers, but the ſingular excellence of one, or of a few of them, conſpicuous in individuals.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the Mutual Dependence of Mankind.

FROM the two facts eſtabliſhed in the concluſion of the laſt chapter, duly conſidered, it appears to me that the juſt notion of the natural equality of all mankind, as far as relates to their mutual duties, is to be derived; and that, however paradoxical it may ſeem, an *equality* the moſt exact and perfect, in reſpect of every moral and ſocial obligation, ſprings from *inequality* itſelf.

Human nature is evidently endowed with a variety of appetites and deſires, adapted to the various objects which are capable of ſupplying its wants, or of furniſhing

niſhing it with pleaſures. The body ſtands in need of conſtant ſupport, which is not to be procured without conſiderable art and labour. This art and labour muſt be greatly increaſed, if not only the neceſſaries, but alſo the conveniencies and elegances of life are deſired, and the refinements of ſenſe conſidered as objects of purſuit. The ſenſes are not only inlets of pleaſures merely corporeal, but of others alſo of a more refined and delicate kind, of which the mind, under the influence of fancy, is the chief percipient. Hence they open a very extenſive field of human enjoyment, and claim the whole compaſs of nature to adminiſter materials for the fine arts. The mind of man is eagerly deſirous of knowledge, and wiſhes to diſcover the relations, the cauſes, and the effects, of the various objects that are preſented to it. Not only corporeal wants

and

and appetites, the ſenſes of beauty, of harmony, and of magnificence, and the love of knowledge, ſubject man to neceſſities, which muſt be ſupplied, or offer to him pleaſures which he cannot but deſire; he is alſo actuated by various affections, ſome ſelfiſh and ſome benevolent, which ſerve as conſtant ſpurs to action, and impel him into various tracks, according to the different complexions of their objects.

Such is the nature of man; and, from what has been ſaid above, as well as from other conſiderations on which I ſhall ſlightly touch, it is evident that each individual is inſufficient not only for his own perfection, but even for the ſupply of his moſt urgent neceſſities. The other animals are by nature provided with defence and covering, with ſubſiſtence and ſhelter. They ſoon attain the full vigour

and the complete exerciſe of their powers, and, without inſtruction or ſuccour, can apply them with certainty to their reſpective ends. But man, as he enters into the world naked, defenceleſs, and unprovided with ſubſiſtence, ſo, without the aſſiſtance and co-operation of his ſpecies, he muſt ever remain in the moſt abject and comfortleſs condition. The inclemency of the ſeaſons, the ſterility of the earth, the ferocity of ſavage animals, his natural imbecillity, oppoſe to his comfortable exiſtence ſo many and ſo powerful obſtacles, as he could never expect of himſelf to ſurmount. He is aſſailed by evils which he cannot repel, ſubject to wants which he cannot ſupply, and ſurrounded by objects which he cannot, by his own ſtrength, convert to his uſe. Deſtined for ſociety, he is immediately thrown on its care, and bound by his own weakneſs

neſs to contribute to its ſtrength. Deſigned to form the moſt intimate union with his fellow men, he is conſtituted miſerable and deſtitute without them; but, conſtrained by this circumſtance, to join his efforts to theirs, he derives the moſt aſtoniſhing acquired power from his natural imbecillity. Furniſhed with capacities greatly ſuperior to inſtinct, he at firſt exerciſes them in a manner greatly below it; and, formed for infinite improvement, he proceeds from the ſmalleſt beginnings; but can neither begin, nor proceed without the co-operation of his fellow men.

What multiplication of ingenuity, what combination of induſtry, what concurrence of different abilities, are requiſite not only to carry to perfection, but even to invent and exerciſe, with any tolerable degree

gree of dexterity, thoſe mechanical arts and employments, which exalt the citizen above the ſavage, which ſweeten and embelliſh ſocial life, which furniſh all that variety of convenience and pleaſure we daily behold and enjoy, and which, from the moſt helpleſs of the animal creation, render man the lord of the world. Will the foreſt be felled and moulded into furniture, the quarry be dug and poliſhed into materials for building, the marſh drained and converted into arable land, the overflowing river confined to its proper channel, the inferior creatures conſtrained to ſuccour human weakneſs by their ſuperior ſtrength, or their ſpoils be manufactured into clothing; will the ſuperfluities of one country ſupply the deficiencies of another, and navigation unite the moſt diſtant regions by the mutual and permanent ties of beneficial commerce;

merce; will all this, and much more, which I forbear to enumerate, be accompliſhed without the united and juſtly regulated efforts of the human ſpecies, and the equal application of the talents of each to the common intereſt *? Will the ſecret ſprings of nature be explored, and the laws, which ſhe obſerves through all her different provinces, be inveſtigated unleſs time and opportunity are furniſhed to the acute and the ingenious, by means of a commodious ſubſiſtence provided for them, by the labour and induſtry of thoſe whoſe faculties are leſs refined and exalted?

Thus it appears that, as each individual is totally inſufficient for his own happineſs, ſo he muſt depend, in a great meaſure,

* See Smith's Wealth of Nations, book 1.

ſure, on the aſſiſtance of others for its attainment; and that, however much any one may contribute to the benefit of his fellow men, by the excellence and ſplendour of his abilities, whether natural or acquired, he derives from them as much as he can beſtow, and frequently much more than he gives.

If the union of all, then, be neceſſary for the ſuſtenance, the convenience, and the happineſs of each individual, and each individual can, in his turn, contribute conſiderably to the common welfare, it follows, as a neceſſary conſequence of this determination of nature, that order and ſubordination muſt be introduced, by which the different members of the community may have their proper taſks allotted to them, the talents of each be directed to their proper objects, injuſtice and

and violence be reſtrained, and as great a ſum of common felicity be produced, as the condition of humanity will permit. Hence, new channels are cut out for abilities, namely, thoſe which are exerciſed in offices of power and authority. As reaſon, however, loudly dictates the inſtitution of theſe for the common good of the human race; ſo ſhe requires that they fall to the lot of thoſe who are qualified to diſcharge them. When this actually takes place, the order of nature is obſerved, and all its happy conſequences enſue. When this order is overturned, and the different departments of ſociety, but eſpecially thoſe of the higheſt dignity and uſe, are committed to ſuch as are incapable of diſcharging the duties of them, all the diſmal effects of folly, injuſtice, and confuſion, are ſpread through the whole of the ſocial frame, and the evils of that inequality, which the

corruption

corruption and blindneſs of mankind have introduced, are ſeverely felt. When the talents and merits of men are allowed their free courſe, are permitted a fair field for their exerciſe, and are not deprived of thoſe rewards which are by nature annexed to them, there never can be any ground to complain of inequality among men. For, however unequal their abilities and opportunities may be in themſelves, the moſt perfect equality exiſts in the diſtribution of the rewards and advantages annexed to each by the conſtitution of nature. The good effects of univerſal induſtry, and the proper application of the powers of every individual, ſo as to produce the greateſt good upon the whole, are then felt through all the ſocial body. Every perſon poſſeſſes that degree of wealth, of conſideration, and of honour, to which he is entitled by his honeſt

neſt induſtry, or by his ſervices to the public. The active and the noble minded exert all their powers for the common welfare, in the moſt efficacious and illuſtrious manner. The indolent and ſelfiſh are conſtrained, by the indigence and contempt into which they muſt otherwiſe fall, to contribute their ſhare to it. But, when power and riches are employed to fruſtrate virtue of the reſpect which is its due, abilities, of the diſtinction and influence which they juſtly claim, and honeſt induſtry, of its natural fruits; a moſt ſhocking *inequality* takes place, which can only ſubſiſt in conjunction with the moſt odious tyranny. In proportion as this oppreſſion prevails, which throws the principal advantages of ſociety into the hands of a few, by no means the moſt reſpectable of its members, and renders it a patrimony and inheritance, of which they may diſpoſe at

 pleaſure,

pleaſure, ſociety is corrupted and miſerable. In proportion as that equality is maintained, which the Creator has eſtabliſhed, and which conſiſts, not in all the members of the ſocial body being placed on a level, but in mutual dependence and parity of obligation among all, amidſt a variety of diſtinctions, conditions, and ranks, ſociety is happy, free, and flouriſhing, ſecuring to each individual the full enjoyment of all his natural advantages, enſuring to the public the complete product of the efforts of all well directed and juſtly combined; uniting all the members of the ſocial body by the ties of mutual intereſt and benevolence, and preſerving as much liberty as is conſiſtent with civil union.

In ſuch a happy ſtate of things, whatever forms of ſubordination may exiſt, as there

there is a mutual dependence among all the parts of the ſocial body; ſo there is not the ſmalleſt ground for pride and inſolence, on the one hand, or for degradation and debaſement of ſentiment, on the other. Are any exalted above others by the ſuperiority of their mental powers, they are inferior to them in other qualities, which are abſolutely neceſſary to the ſupport and convenience of life. If one excels in uſeful qualities, another is diſtinguiſhed by agreeable and ſhining ones; and, as pleaſure, without utility, is pernicious, ſo utility, without pleaſure, becomes languid and inſipid. If one is exalted to power, or illuſtrious by fame, thoſe who faithfully diſcharge the duties of an humble and obſcure ſtation, enable him to fulfil the duties of his more conſpicuous one, and contribute to his exaltation, by occupying thoſe parts of the general ſyſtem,

without

without which the higher orders could not ſubſiſt, and by paying him that deference and reſpect to which his merit is entitled. If one is eminent by his wiſdom and ſagacity, by his genius and wit, by his knowledge and erudition; another is no leſs diſtinguiſhed by his activity and ſtrength, by his ſkill and dexterity, by his induſtry and labour. If one is venerable by his elevation of ſoul, by his generoſity, public ſpirit, and intrepidity; another is amiable by his gentleneſs and complaiſance, by his patience, modeſty, and meekneſs; and, if the former qualities are the ornaments, the latter are the great ſweeteners, of life, while both, operating in conjunction, ſupply mutual defects, and impart mutual ſtrength and embelliſhment. If thoſe who fill the higher ſtations in a becoming manner, confer the greateſt benefits on their fellow men, they are equal-

ly

ly indebted to them for their ſupport. If the latter ſtand in need of the judgment and penetration of the former, in order to deviſe the beſt plans of proſecuting the public good, and of maintaining the general ſafety; theſe, again, ſtand in need of their reſolution and diligence to carry their plans into execution. If ſome contribute to the inſtruction and improvement of their fellow men, by teaching and illuſtrating the grand principles of virtue, on which the welfare of ſociety is principally founded, thoſe who enjoy the benefit of their inſtructions, turn them to their profit, by practiſing towards them the virtues which they inculcate. If one claſs of men maintain good order and peace, and another exerciſe all the elegant and uſeful arts of ſocial life, there are others who ſecure theſe enjoyments and advantages againſt external invaſion, and offer

their

their blood as their contribution to the common intereſt.

As, in the human body, therefore, the welfare of the whole depends upon that of each individual member, and that again is neceſſarily affected by whatever affects the whole ſyſtem; and there is thus a mutual dependence and ſympathy among all the parts; ſo, in ſociety, every individual having a particular portion of talents, and, if properly placed, a particular ſtation, conformable to this, allotted to him, becomes neceſſary to the welfare of the whole community; and as he affects, is likewiſe affected by, its proſperity or detriment. All are united by mutual dependence and ſupport: Break but one link of the chain, and the reſt are of no uſe, or, at leaſt, are deprived of much advantage and comfort, which is enjoyed when the ſocial ſeries is complete.

Nor

Nor ought it to be alledged, that many of thoſe wants, which cannot be ſupplied but in ſociety, are not the wants of nature, but are merely adventitious, and generated in that ſociety, the neceſſity of which they are produced to prove. We readily grant that, in refined and highly poliſhed ſtates of civiliſed life, where luxury has univerſally diffuſed its effeminating influence, many wants and deſires are generated, which are not only not agreeable to nature, but repugnant to human perfection and felicity. Let it however be obſerved, that this pernicious tendency to human happineſs begins by looſening thoſe ties which knit men moſt firmly together. It is ſelfiſh, not ſocial, enjoyments which are moſt adverſe to human perfection, and man begins to injure his own happineſs, by ſeparating it from the general good. It is undoubted that all the

original

original powers of human nature are carried to the higheſt perfection in ſociety, and droop and languiſh in ſolitude. That ſtate, ſurely, which is moſt perfective of every human faculty, is the moſt *natural*, and it is only by the ſtrangeſt perverſion of terms and ideas that the contrary can be aſſerted. But the perfection of the ſocial ſtate cannot be attained, without the mutual dependence of mankind, in that extenſive ſenſe in which I have exhibited it. That dependence is, therefore, founded in the conſtitution of nature itſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Final Cauſes of the Variety of Human Talents.

IT is evidently the intention of Divine Providence in beſtowing upon different perſons different powers and abilities, to point them out for different ſtations and circumſtances, to aſſign to them different duties and taſks, and thus to promote moſt effectually the welfare of the human ſpecies. By this ſcheme, it is unqueſtionable, many more advantages are obtained, with regard to the beſt intereſts of mankind, than could have been ſecured by diſpenſing the ſame portion of ability and virtue, that diſtinguiſhes our ſpecies, on any other plan whatever. For every par-

ticular talent is thus cultivated with greater ſucceſs, when it occupies the conſtant and habitual attention of its poſſeſſor, than it could have been if he had been overloaded with a multiplicity of employments, or diſtracted by the exerciſe of various abilities. A greater ſum of excellence is thus produced in the ſpecies, and, of conſequence, its perfection and happineſs is more effectually promoted. By this plan of diſtribution, moreover, opportunities are afforded for the exerciſe of many virtues, which could not have otherwiſe exiſted. Thus, were all equally wiſe and learned, no opportunity could be afforded for diſplaying either a communicative or a docile diſpoſition. Were all equally rich, or equally powerful, neither generoſity nor gratitude could be excited; and, as there could be no demand for ſuccour and protection, on the one hand, ſo, on the

the other, there would be no occaſion for condeſcenſion and ſympathy. Finally, mankind, by being rendered abſolutely neceſſary to each other, are conſtrained to maintain a mutual intercourſe of good offices; and ſociety is thus united by the firmeſt and moſt laſting bonds.

In fact, this diverſity of talents and virtues appears to be the chief circumſtance which qualifies men for a ſocial and political exiſtence. Were all endowed with the ſame definite portion of powers, of whatever kind, to what purpoſe would men aſſociate, ſince they would derive little more from their union than they individually poſſeſſed? An accumulation of mere ſtrength would be the only effect of combined powers, in the ſame manner that ſix horſes can draw a greater weight, and to a greater diſtance, than two. This

diverſity

diverſity of abilities, by rendering mankind mutually dependent from their detached weakneſs, becomes the ſtrongeſt motive to aſſociation, the moſt powerful bond of ſociety, and its greateſt excellence and perfection, when it is properly arranged. Without this, and on the ſuppoſition that the ſame ſpecific qualities were, as in the brutes, allotted to each individual, a more perfect *equality* would indeed be eſtabliſhed among all the members of the ſpecies; but it would be an *equality* uſeleſs for every purpoſe of aſſociation, and would ſerve rather to ſeparate than to unite them. This circumſtance, I am inclined to think, has not hitherto been ſufficiently conſidered, at leaſt not in the light in which I have repreſented it. In this light, thoſe pleas of ſuperior wiſdom, or of ſuperior power, which Ariſtotle *, and

* Pol. l. 1mo, c. 2.

and ſome late writers, who appear not very favourable to the cauſe of equal freedom, have urged as the foundations of the dominion of one part of mankind over the reſt, are deſtitute of all force. For, if theſe pleas ſhould be admitted, even in their utmoſt extent, they will furniſh no ground for independent dominion and ſuperiority, unleſs it can be proved, at the ſame time, that the poſſeſſors of theſe qualities are equally endowed with every other which is neceſſary or conducive to human felicity. Should the wiſdom and the ſtrength (as is commonly the caſe) be found in different ſubjects, it will remain to be decided to which the ſuperiority is to be aſſigned, and what particular degree of each of theſe qualities is neceſſary to conſtitute a rightful claim. Art and ingenuity may likewiſe ſuppoſe themſelves entitled to ſome portion of dominion, ſince

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it is undoubted that their influence is very conſiderable in the affairs of life. In this manner, every thing is thrown into confuſion, and no clear notion of *right* is any where left. But, by the view we have taken of the ſubject, (which will, I flatter myſelf, be found to be the true one) every man acquires a clear and definite claim according to the portion he contributes to the general welfare, a moſt ſalutary *equality* is ſtill left among mankind, and the community is knit together by ties which cannot be diſſolved, without the deſtruction of general and particular happineſs. In a word, the ſlighteſt contemplation of human nature convinces us that man is deſigned by his Creator for ſociety, and, as this was his deſtination, he is ſo conſtituted as to be impelled towards it by all his propenſities and powers, and link-

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ed to it by all his wants and enjoyments, with whatever abilities he may be endowed, or in whatever ſtation he may be placed.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The juſt Notion of the natural Equality of Men is placed in Equality of Obligation.— The proper Tendency of this Doctrine.

FROM what has been already ſaid, it will now ſufficiently appear, that the moſt perfect equality of obligation, of benefits received and returned, ſubſiſts among all the members of ſociety, of whatever denomination or degree, who faithfully diſcharge their duties; that that dependence, which the proud and the powerful are fain to limit to one ſphere and ſtation, runs through all alike, and that independence, at which all aſpire, is nowhere to be found among men. For although

although any human being ſhould be poſſeſſed of every imaginable perfection and advantage; yet, while he lives in ſociety, and abundantly ſatisfies all his ſocial propenſities, from which the ſublimeſt pleaſures of human nature are derived, he receives from mankind ſuch an ample portion of happineſs, that he is bound to compenſate it by every return, which the utmoſt exertion of his abilities can enable him to make. From his elevated ſuperiority he is thus obliged to deſcend to the *equality* of a citizen, and of a man.

In the eye of reaſon, therefore, and of the Univerſal Parent, every honeſt ſtation of life is equally honourable, ſince they are all but parts of the great ſocial body which his wiſdom has planned, and his power preſerves. In this view, no human creature is more or leſs worthy than ano-

ther, but in as far as he diſcharges or neglects the part allotted to him, and augments or diminiſhes the ſum of general felicity; or as he occupies a place which he is incapable of filling, deprives others of their juſt ſtation, ſnatches from them the rewards to which they are entitled, or prevents them from performing the duties of the ſtation in which they are placed, and of the ſphere in which they move.

The principles above eſtabliſhed are widely different from thoſe which pride and tyranny embrace and inculcate. If men are endowed with ſuperior abilities, or raiſed to an exalted ſtation, they will not eaſily admit that, between them and their inferiors, the dependence and the obligation are reciprocal. Unleſs they are diſtinguiſhed by peculiar generoſity of ſentiment, they will conſider it as no very

pleaſing

pleaſing doctrine that, between the ſovereign and the ſubject, the magiſtrate and the people, the great and the mean, the rich and the poor, the acute and the dull, the learned and the ignorant, there is no difference but in the poſſeſſion of different powers, and in the diſcharge of different offices peculiar to each capacity, and uſeful to all; and that, if the firſt have a juſt demand on the ſecond for ſubmiſſion and obedience, for honour and reſpect, for convenience and eaſe, the ſecond have as juſt a claim on them for protection and defence, for the adminiſtration of juſtice, and the preſervation of equal liberty, for the ſupply of their wants and the relief of their diſtreſſes, for inſtruction and good example. Pride and tyranny would place, on the one ſide, all honour and reſpect, and nothing but diſregard and contempt, on the other; here, all oppreſſion and violence,

violence, and there, all patience and ſubmiſſion; here, all convenience and pleaſure, and there, all labour and indigence; here, would have the ſmalleſt aſſiſtance to be conſidered as an eternal obligation, and there, the greateſt ſervices to paſs for indiſpenſible duties. With ſuch ſentiments, it is no wonder that the mutual dependence and obligation of men ſhould be rejected as a dangerous and odious doctrine, equally ſubverſive of public order, and of private right. Thoſe who think and act in this manner, either making no returns for the benefits they receive from ſociety, or poſſeſſing no capacity to make them, are eager to repreſent every notion of mutual obligation and equality among men, as imaginary and preſumptuous, and to oblige the world to look on them as its eſtabliſhed lords. But ſuch opinions can never retain their influence, when knowledge

ledge has begun to make any progreſs, and mankind to underſtand their own nature and dignity. The bodies of men can never be enſlaved, when their minds are free; and the moſt diligent care of all deſpots, of whatever rank or denomination, ever has been, and ever muſt be, to keep mankind in ignorance. As ſoon as knowledge diffuſes her light over the dungeon in which they are inchained, the doors are thrown open, and their chains fall off. In fact, pride and tyranny, by deſtroying that mutual obligation, and that juſt equality which we have now eſtabliſhed, ſap the very pillars which ſupport greatneſs and diſplay ſplendour. For, if there is no mutual obligation, no parity of right, then power, on the one hand, and weakneſs, on the other, are the only bonds of ſocial or civil union. It is eaſy to ſee where, in ſuch circumſtances, the

greateſt

greateſt power will be found; whether in the hands of the poor, the mean, the illiterate; or in thoſe of the rich, the great, the learned, and the ingenious. But if the grand principle of *equality* of obligation, and of mutual dependence, is adopted in opinion, as it is eſtabliſhed in nature; if ſtations and offices are neither unjuſtly uſurped, nor their duties perfidiouſly and weakly performed; the obligation to obedience and ſubmiſſion is as ſtrong on inferiors, as that of juſtice and diſintereſted zeal for the public good is on rulers and magiſtrates; and the honour obtained by diſtinguiſhed abilities is equally due to their poſſeſſors, as the fruits of their honeſt labour are due to the lower orders of the community. This principle places the fabric of ſociety on a firm and laſting foundation, and all the parts of the building, however different in point

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of ſplendour and ornament, are ſo cloſely connected, and ſo neceſſary to the whole, that none of them can be removed or defaced, without injuring the beauty or the ſolidity of the ſtructure. This equally balances all the parts and members of the ſocial body, makes pre-eminence itſelf emerge from common intereſt, and again depreſſes that ſeparate independence which pre-eminence would aſſume, by referring it to that collective power from which it is wholly derived. A conſtant balance, and reaction of obligation and duty, is thus maintained through all the departments of ſociety, ſimilar to what we obſerve in nature. As exhalations and vapours from the ocean and the lower parts of the earth, reſting on the tops of mountains, form the ſprings whence are derived the rivers that water and fertilize the different regions of the globe, and return at

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laſt into the ocean, and thus a conſtant circulation is maintained; ſo the more elevated ſpheres of ſociety derive their political exiſtence and energy from the general maſs, and, if properly filled, diffuſe through the whole ſocial body a ſalutary influence, which again ſerves to maintain their dignity and ſplendour. The individuals that occupy theſe ſpheres, detached from ſociety, and conſidered merely as individuals of the human race, are entitled to no diſtinction or ſuperiority, but what ariſes from corporeal or mental qualities, which are the diſtinctions of nature. But, viewed in their connection with the political body, they claim their pre-eminence and power, on the ſame principle by which ſociety is held together, namely, that the general good muſt limit the pretenſions of individuals.

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This is that *equality* of mankind, which has been ſo often aſſerted, but is ſeldom well underſtood—an *equality* which the proud and tyrannical diſdain, becauſe it oppoſes their ſelfiſhneſs or indolence—an *equality* which turbulent and deſigning men are fain to abuſe as an engine for overturning regularity and government, and for introducing that anarchy in the midſt of which they themſelves are to riſe. It is an *equality* which implies ſubordination—an *equality* of wants, with a diverſity of means of ſupplying them—an *equality* of obligation, with different modes of diſcharging it. It is an *equality* which, by rendering all equally neceſſary, makes all, who faithfully diſcharge their duties, equally honourable in the ſight of God; but, by requiring higher and lower ſtations, and various diſtinctions and ſpheres, eſtabliſhes different degrees of reſpectabi-

lity and honour among men. It is an *equality* which degrades none but the tyrant, the ruffian, the thief, the voluptuary, and the ſluggard; and exalts all, but theſe, to the enobling dignity of conſtituent members of the grand community of mankind, and of fellow labourers with God in advancing the felicity of his moral and intellectual creation.

Not leſs abſurd, than pernicious, therefore, is that levelling notion, which confounds all diſtinctions and ranks, annihilates ſubordination, and deſtroys that juſt *equality* which is founded in nature, and in human happineſs. While this frantic opinion is directly contrary to the appointment of God in the eſtabliſhment of ſociety, and horribly deſtructive in its conſequences, it commonly tends, like every other extravagant and vicious paſſion,

ſion, to fruſtrate its own gratification. Taking *licentiouſneſs* for *liberty*, it becomes the greateſt promoter of deſpotiſm. For, as nothing has brought religion more into diſrepute, than bigotry, fanaticiſm, and hypocriſy, which have ſo often aſſumed that venerable and ſacred name; and as nothing has brought ſo much diſgrace on philoſophy, both in ancient and modern times, as the profligate lives of pretended philoſophers; ſo *licentiouſneſs*, appearing under the diſguiſe of *liberty*, has a direct tendency to render it either odious or contemptible. The tyrannical oppreſſors of their fellow men, and their ſervile abettors, eagerly lay hold of the horrid exceſſes which licentiouſneſs produces, and at which they ſecretly rejoice, as infidels delight in the corruptions of religion; paint them with the deepeſt colours of an inflamed imagination; and aſcribe them

with

with triumph to thoſe principles of true liberty, to which they are ſo repugnant in their origin, and ſo pernicious in their conſequences. The ignorant multitude, incapable of diſtinguiſhing appearances from realities, haſtily admit both the aſſertion and its inference, and ſeek refuge from anarchy in the chains of deſpotiſm. The wiſe, however, and the good, will equally guard againſt the wild declamation of the demagogue, and the crafty inſinuations of the tyrant, will hold faſt thoſe eternal principles of equity which God has impreſſed on their ſouls, and, if they cannot evince their truth, or inculcate their practice, on mankind, will deplore the blindneſs and the corruption of their ſpecies, and pray that the Father of light may at laſt unfold a day of knowledge and ſerenity, when the benignant voice of truth ſhall neither be ſtifled by

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the mandate of tyranny, nor drowned by the acclammations of tumult, when the power of oppreſſion ſhall be extinguiſhed together with the deſire of it; when freedom ſhall be eſtabliſhed on the baſis of ſubordination, and ſecured by obedience to law; when men ſhall be attached to juſtice by the permanent bleſſings of ſecurity and peace.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Some Circumſtances of Equality not yet conſidered.

HAVING, in the preceding chapters, explained the chief foundation on which it may be aſſerted that all men are equal, in as far as relates to every ſocial and civil duty, I ſhall now briefly point out ſeveral other reſpects in which the *equality* of mankind is farther evident.

I. All men are endowed with the ſame frame of body, and with the ſame general conſtitution of mind. Notwithſtanding the diverſities which obtain among individuals, in point of higher or lower degrees of excellence in any of the original

original faculties of our nature, all the ſpecies, excepting ſome uncommon and monſtrous inſtances, is characteriſed by the ſame members and organs of body, and by the ſame faculties, propenſities, and affections of ſoul. Does the richeſt, the moſt powerful, the moſt beautiful, the moſt ingenious among the ſons of men, feel leſs the ſenſe of hunger and thirſt, of cold and pain, than thoſe of contrary deſcriptions; or are theſe laſt leſs diſtinguiſhed than the former, by the general conſtruction and organs of the human frame? Do not the rich and the poor, the obſcure and the elevated, come into the world in the ſame ſtate of imbecillity and wretchedneſs? Is the infant of opulent parents poſſeſſed of greater vigour, or does he require leſs the aſſiſtance of thoſe on whoſe care he is immediately caſt, than the infant of the peaſant or the beggar?

beggar? Can he already diſcern and provide his food, uſe his limbs, defend himſelf from danger, and, by his hereditary independence, vindicate the true ſuperiority of his condition? So far is any of theſe from being the caſe, that, if there is any difference, in theſe reſpects, between him and the infant of meaner rank, it is all in favour of the latter. This, from the ſtrong and healthy conſtitution of his parents, brings along with him a frame naturally vigorous and robuſt, and requiring only the moſt ordinary care for its nouriſhment, its preſervation, and its final maturity. The other often inherits from thoſe who begat him a ſickly and ſlender conſtitution, which the utmoſt attention and aſſiduity can hardly preſerve from extinction in the moment of birth, and afterwards more frequently debilitate than ſtrengthen.

Again,

Again, the ſame natural principles, propenſities, and affections, operate on all mankind with different degrees of force, according to their different ſituations. All men, of whatever rank or condition, are ſtrongly actuated by a principle of ſelf-preſervation, by the love of liberty, by the deſire of pleaſure, and an averſion to pain, by the love of ſociety, and a diſlike of ſolitude, by the parental, conjugal, and filial attachments, by a ſenſe of honour, by reſentment of injuries, and by a certain affection for their country. None are deſtitute of ſome perception of beauty, order, and magnificence in the works of nature or art, and none, but ſuch as are monſtrouſly corrupted, are inſenſible to the eternal diſtinctions of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of truth and error, in human judgments and actions. Even the moſt ſtupid, ignorant, and perverſe of the

human ſpecies differ, in this reſpect, from the brutes, that, as they remember the paſt and anticipate the future, ſo they are capable of forming and purſuing ſome plan of life, of conceiving ſome ſyſtem of happineſs which they deſire to attain, or ſome image of miſery which they endeavour to avoid. No human being, therefore, enjoys or ſuffers like the inferior animals, according to the blind impulſes of appetite, or the unanticipated impreſſions of ſenſe, but has ſome previous deliberation and choice with regard to the objects of deſire and averſion. Every mortal alſo feels that, by the birth-right of human nature, he is entitled to certain *rights*, of which he cannot be deprived without ceaſing to be a man, or without envying the condition of the inferior creatures. Theſe are the common features of humanity which characteriſe all the ſpecies,

ſpecies, and eſtabliſh among them ſo many points of equality.

II. All men are equal in being equally expoſed to viciſſitudes, and to death. To attempt any proof of theſe facts would be nugatory and ridiculous. But the conſequences to be deduced from them, with reſpect to the light in which the different orders and deſcriptions of men ought to view each other, are not ſo evident, or at leaſt poſſeſs not that influence over the heart, to which they are in reaſon entitled. For, if the moſt exalted of mankind muſt, as well as the loweſt, ſubmit to the ſtroke of death, and moulder the prey of worms in the grave, if this event equally hangs over his head every moment, and, when it happens, muſt ſtrip him of every external diſtinction; can any pretenſions be more abſurd than thoſe of pride, which

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are ſolely founded on a pre-eminence ſo tranſient and uncertain? For any one, therefore, to value himſelf on ſuch tranſitory diſtinctions, is as ridiculous, as it would be for a traveller to imagine himſelf proprietor of every field through which he paſſed.

Beſides, the ſtations which diſcriminate the different orders of ſociety, are by no means permanently attached to any number of individuals that may now enjoy them, or to their deſcendants. They are ſubject to many viciſſitudes, and have a conſtant tendency to change. As the parts of material nature are in perpetual fluctuation, and are ſometimes altered by ſecret and ſilent decays, ſometimes by violent convulſions, by tempeſts, hurricanes, inundations, earthquakes, and volcanos; ſo the various orders of ſociety are expoſed to conſtant changes, partly by ſudden and

and violent agitations, partly by thoſe ſecret, but certain, cauſes, which are continually operating the exaltation or the depreſſion of men. Foreign wars or domeſtic commotions, ſignal calamities or uncommon proſperity, illuſtrious virtues or flagrant vices, produce the moſt wonderful alterations in human fortunes. Leaving the public tranſactions of our own times, which furniſh moſt ſtriking proofs of this fact, what numberleſs inſtances croud into the mind while it revolves the events of ancient or modern hiſtory!

Fortuna ſaevo laeta negotio et
Ludum inſolentem ludere pertinax
Tranſmutat incertos honores,
Nunc mihi nunc alii benigna *.
HOR. Od. l. iii. 29.

There

* For fortune ever changing dame
Indulges her malicious joy,

And

There is, beſides, in every ſtation a certain tendency to change, and the ſame cauſes that produced the elevation of the higher orders of men, are imperceptibly operating alſo in favour of others placed in inferior conditions. As a projectile, when it has reached its higheſt point of elevation, begins immediately to deſcend, and continues its courſe downwards with an accelerated velocity; ſo there appears to be a certain point of exaltation, beyond which human grandeur cannot proceed, and which, by being the termination of ſplendour, becomes the beginning of decline, and of final precipitation. On the other hand, as the ſeed of a tree, from the moment

And conſtant plays her haughty game,
Proud of her office to deſtroy;
To-day to me her bounty flows,
And now on others ſhe the bliſs beſtows.
FRANCIS's Tranſlation.

moment it is dropped into the ground, is continually expanding, and receiving from the earth new additions to its growth, till it mingle its branches with the clouds, and cover the ſoil with its ſhade; in like manner, among the lower orders of men, there are evident principles of increaſe and amelioration of their condition, which fail not to operate ſucceſsfully when they are favoured by opportunities.

For, what are the vices which are apteſt to infect elevated and affluent circumſtances; and what the virtues which an humble and hard lot moſt eaſily engenders and cheriſhes? In the former, we often behold pride, which excites indignation and hatred, and, conſequently, combinations to repreſs it. We behold luxury and extravagance, which waſte rapidly the moſt ſplendid fortunes, and incapacitate

tate for exertion and activity. We behold careleſſneſs and inattention, which allow people's affairs to run into diſorder, and occaſion irreparable confuſion at laſt. We often behold extortion, oppreſſion, and flagrant abuſe of power, in order to retrieve broken circumſtances, which haſten the ruin they are employed to prevent, and produce indelible diſgrace.

In an humble and ſevere lot, we frequently ſee humility and modeſty, which never fail to conciliate complacency. We ſee patience and frugality, of which the former renders the hardeſt condition tolerable, and the latter draws eaſe from penury. We ſee induſtry, and a ſucceſsful exertion of abilities, which firſt make men uſeful and indiſpenſibly neceſſary even to their ſuperiors; then bring them into notice and regard; and, laſtly, raiſe them

them to truſt and affluence. Thus, while thoſe who are placed in the higheſt ſtations, ſuppoſing they have no exertions to make, becauſe they have reached the pinnacle of human greatneſs, are verging towards decline and obſcurity, thoſe who move in an inferior ſphere, urged by their neceſſities, or ſtimulated by their ambition, are making conſtant efforts to riſe, watching every favourable opportunity of ſucceſs, and ſilently climbing the ſteep from which the former are deſcending. Where are now thoſe illuſtrious families that occupy ſuch a remarkable place in ancient hiſtory? They are not ſurely all extinct; their deſcendents, doubtleſs, exiſt ſomewhere upon the earth. But they are confounded with the general maſs of mankind, while others have ariſen to ſhine in the ſphere from which they have departed. It is thus that Divine Providence,

which has, for the wiſeſt reaſons, eſtabliſhed, an inequality of ſtations and talents among men, has, by allowing their virtues and vices to operate their natural effects of alternate depreſſion and exaltation, reſtored the balance, which diſappears from the view of ſuperficial obſervers.

III. If we juſtly eſtimate the advantages and inconveniencies of every condition of life, we ſhall find that they nearly balance each other, that the ſum of happineſs, ſhared among the human ſpecies, is divided in pretty equitable portions; and that equality of enjoyment is another ground, on which the different ranks of ſociety, if not the individuals that are placed in them, are on a level. The grand difference, in this reſpect, conſiſts in what is appropriated to no ſtation or fortune, but

is equally open to them all—internal diſpoſition and character; which, it is unqueſtionable, may be diſplayed in their greateſt excellence, and enjoyed in their higheſt perfection, in the loweſt, as well as in the moſt elevated, ſphere. As the different regions of the globe, however removed from the Equator, or the Poles, enjoy equal meaſures of light and darkneſs, though diſtributed in different manners; ſo the different orders of ſociety poſſeſs equal portions of felicity, and are expoſed to equal pains, though the modes of enjoyment and ſuffering be diverſified. If the honours of an exalted ſtation are greater than thoſe of an humble one, its duties are alſo more difficult; if its virtues are more ſplendid, its temptations are more enticing, and its vices more conſpicuous; if its enjoyments are more refined, its ſufferings are more acute, and its

its afflictions more durable. Is it ſuppoſed that the burden of labour is heavier than that of indolence, or the pains of indigence greater than thoſe of ſenſuality? Conſider that health often ſmiles on the cheek of poverty, while diſeaſe deforms the face of opulence. Do any imagine that the ſolicitude of providing daily ſubſiſtence is greater than that which attends the improvement, or the ſecurity, of an extenſive eſtate—that the real wants of nature afford more anxiety and care, than the imaginary demands of extravagance—that the evils which are really felt, are greater than thoſe which diſtempered fancy creates?—let ſuch conſider the diſcontent, the uneaſineſs, the dejection, the wayward humours, and the ſullen gloom, that ſo often haunt the great and the wealthy, and acknowledge that ſleep viſits the couch of ſtraw, and flies from the bed

of

of down. Do any imagine that it is more difficult to purſue, with conſtancy and firmneſs, the rugged and thorny paths of the humble vale of life, than to maintain the elevated poſts of dignity and honour, in the midſt of intrigue, of competition, of clamour, and of all the uncertainty of favour? Let them reflect on the ſolicitudes and the terrors of the public governour, when unſucceſsful iſſues attend his adminiſtration, when the tide of popular approbation begins to ebb, when his enemies ſpread diſcontent through the land, repreſent him to the people as the author of their calamities, and rouſe them to ſacrifice him as the victim of their fury. The ſtorm often burſts on the palace, when it paſſes inoffenſively over the cottage!

IV.

IV. All men are equal in having ſome peculiar duty to diſcharge, ſome peculiar advantages for the exhibition of correſponding virtues, ſome peculiar temptations to correſponding vices, and in being placed in a courſe of probation for a future and final ſtate. If the duties of each ſtation are properly diſcharged, its virtues proportionably diſplayed, and its temptations ſurmounted, it is difficult to ſay whether the greateſt praiſe is due to the ſuperior or inferior ranks of ſociety. If the duties or the virtues of either are neglected, or its temptations allowed to prevail, the blame is equal on both ſides, although the puniſhments are frequently diſtributed very unequally under human governments. That all men are at preſent placed in a preparatory ſtate for a future exiſtence, both natural and revealed religion concur in evincing. It is no

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leſs evident, from the external principles by which the divine government is adminiſtered, that the characters which men have acquired in the preſent period of being will be the only meaſures of their future fate, and that all thoſe diſtinctions, which are wholly external, will then diſappear forever! If any regard is then paid to the different ſtations which men have occupied here below, it will only be in order to determine how far they have diſcharged the duties of them, and what degree of merit, or demerit, is to be aſſigned to each individual, according to the talents he poſſeſſed, and the opportunities he enjoyed for the practice of every virtue. Here all men are placed on the moſt perfect equality, have the ſame hopes, the ſame fears, the ſame pleas to urge, the ſame titles to produce, or rather are levelled by the ſame incapacity of all merit,

but

but what is derived from the clemency of the Great Judge, operating through the plan of ſalvation he has eſtabliſhed. With his eyes turned to this ſcene, with any adequate impreſſion of this awful conſummation on his heart, (and mad muſt he be to whoſe mind ſuch thoughts are never preſent!) can any one deny the equality of mankind, nor perceive the empty titles, and tinſel ſplendours, and idle pageants of this tranſitory period, ſwimming before his ſight, and finally diſappearing, like the dreams which occupy his fancy in ſleep, but fade and are forgotten when he opens his eyes, and again enjoys the reality of things!

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ESSAY, &c.

BOOK II.

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ESSAY, &c.

BOOK II.

What are the Rights reſulting from the natural Equality of Men?

CHAP. I.

Of the Manner in which we acquire our Notion of Rights.

IN the diſcuſſion of moral and metaphyſical ſubjects, hardly any thing has occaſioned greater obſcurity, and, of conſequence, more violent diſputes, than the ambiguity of terms, and the vague and inde-

indeterminate ideas annexed to them by different parties. Of this no word can afford a more ſtriking inſtance than the term *right*, eſpecially when applied to denote a moral capacity to *act*, to *poſſeſs*, or to *demand*, in certain circumſtances. Of this the notion will be found to be as various, as the philoſophical or religious ſyſtems which men have adopted, the profeſſions which they have embraced, the ſtations which they occupy, or the company they frequent. Although people may agree in ſome general and indefinite notions of *right*, yet, in the peculiar ideas they entertain with regard to its application to all the particular objects of human action and purſuit, it will be found that their conceptions are not reducible to any determinate ſtandard. We are not, on this account, however, to imagine that the rights of men are indefinable, or that there

there are not general claſſes to which they may be reduced. For, although the private rights of individuals muſt vary according to their different circumſtances and relations, there are ſtill certain and permanent principles on which they are founded, and from which they muſt be deduced, in order to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe powers which fraud ſecretly obtains, or violence openly uſurps. Unleſs this were the caſe, laws and obligations would be unmeaning words, and power the only arbiters of right and wrong.

Without entering at preſent into any abſtruſe and refined ſpeculations concerning the foundation of moral obligation, I ſhall only obſerve, that we ſeem, in general, to denominate that *right* which has a tendency to promote the univerſal happineſs of mankind, or that of the individual himſelf,

himſelf, when it is not repugnant to the more extenſive intereſt, whether of the whole ſpecies, or of the ſmaller communities into which the ſpecies is divided. To theſe two general heads, namely, *tendency* to general, and *tendency* to particular, happineſs, when properly limited, it will be found that every thing juſt, and honourable, and praiſeworthy, in human ſentiments and conduct is ultimately referable. Whoever *does*, or *poſſeſſes*, or *demands*, what is conducive to the common good, or to his own intereſt in conſiſtency with this, that he ſhould *do*, or *poſſeſs*, or *demand*, we ſay he has a *right* to *do*, to *poſſeſs*, or to *demand*, it.

It is evident, that the only notions we can form to ourſelves of happineſs muſt be derived from thoſe original principles of our nature, by which certain objects

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are conſtituted the means of ſatisfaction and pleaſure, and others the cauſes of uneaſineſs and pain. The former become, on that account, *deſirable*, and the latter, *diſagreeable* and *odious*. By implanting theſe deſires and averſions in the ſoul of man, the Creator evidently intended that they ſhould be indulged within the limits he has preſcribed to them, and, in order to diſcover theſe limits, has ſuperadded the noble faculty of reaſon. Accordingly, there ſeems annexed to every natural *deſire* and *propenſity* of the heart, a certain feeling of a *right* to its indulgence. The original propenſities and deſires ſpring up ſpontaneouſly in the ſoul, and impel it to action. In children, theſe are the firſt ſtimulants to motion and activity, and, as they are ſtill undirected by the higher principles of our nature, and by the improvements of experience, conſti-

tute

tute their only notions of *right*. As the inferior animals are immediately carried by nature towards thoſe objects which are adapted to ſatisfy their inſtinctive principles; ſo men, in the firſt period of their exiſtence, greedily deſire and ſeize whatever their appetites or paſſions point out to them as agreeable, and conſider it as an injury to with-hold from them the indulgence; but ſuch is the beautiful order eſtabliſhed in the human conſtitution, that many of theſe propenſities limit and balance each other, ſo that the immoderate indulgence of one prevents that ſatisfaction of others, which is alſo a neceſſary ingredient of happineſs. Different pains and inconveniencies, ſoon experienced from unbridled propenſities, ſuggeſt the neceſſity of moderation and ſelf-command. The pleaſures and the advantages of ſociety attach men to their ſpecies,

cies, and point out, at the ſame time, the neceſſity of regulating their conduct in ſuch a manner as to prevent their deſires and purſuits from encroaching on the equally natural deſires and purſuits of others.

Reaſon, recollecting the paſt, and anticipating the future, eſtabliſhes ſuch rules of action and enjoyment as unite the perfection and happineſs of the individual with the general intereſt of the ſpecies, and convert the harmonious movements of the whole ſocial body into the moſt efficacious means of promoting the happineſs of all its members of whatever rank or degree. The moral faculty, ſurveying ſuch a beautiful and ſalutary arrangement, ſanctions it with its approbation, and decrees that every human being is bound to act and to enjoy in conformi-

ty to the principles of this ſyſtem. The various relations and circumſtances of men being conſidered and defined, general maxims are formed, which are denominated the *laws of nature*. As the human conſtitution is the work of the ſupreme Creator, whatever is, by juſt inference, deducible from this conſtitution, as a rule of conduct to man, is as juſtly held to be a divine law, as if the Omnipotent Legiſlator had proclaimed it with the moſt audible voice. From theſe general laws, various *rights* are deduced competent to men, whether as inherent in their common nature, or as belonging to thoſe peculiar relations in which they are placed, by the neceſſary arrangements of ſociety.

In this manner, the notions of the different *rights* of men are acquired.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The two grand Diviſions of Rights which flow from the natural Equality of Mankind.

FROM the ſhort deduction contained in the preceding chapter, joined to what has been eſtabliſhed in the firſt book, it is evident that there are certain *natural rights*, which cannot be infringed without overturning the foundations of human ſociety, and that there are others which belong only to certain deſcriptions of men, in conſequence of that ſocial order which is neceſſary for the general felicity. The former are to be conſidered as the original conditions of the ſocial compact; the latter, as the means by which it is to be executed;

executed; and both flow from that idea of equality of obligation which we have above illuſtrated.

In the firſt place, there are certain principles ſo ſtrongly interwoven with the human frame, ſo intimately blended with its eſſence, ſo efficient of all that can be called human, that the violation of them cannot be regarded in any other light than in that of a degradation, nay, an entire extinction of the diſtinctive attributes of the human character. Of conſequence, every man ſtipulates, by entering into ſociety with his ſpecies, that the enjoyments grounded on theſe principles, or, in other words, the *rights* which attach to them, as the gifts of God to his rational creatures, ſhall be maintained to him inviolate; and reſerves to himſelf the privilege of defending them at all hazards, whenever it

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is attempted to wreſt them from him. For, as every human being is a conſtituent member of the ſocial body, he is, while he diſcharges the duties incident to his peculiar capacity, entitled, equally with every other, to the grand prerogatives of human nature, which civil ſociety is intended to maintain and improve. He is as neceſſary, as the moſt diſtinguiſhed of mankind, to the general perfection and felicity, and he contributes to it that portion which his abilities enable him to furniſh. The rights, therefore, which are indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the preſervation and happineſs of each individual, in whatever rank or ſituation he may be placed, muſt equally belong to all, and can never ſuffer the ſmalleſt diminution from any claims or prerogatives attached to the diſtinctions of fortune, of rank, or of talents. They are the neceſſary appendages of that

equality,

equality, which ſubſiſts among all men amidſt the diverſities which ſociety and civiliſation have introduced.

I ſhall firſt briefly enumerate and explain the inherent and original *rights* of human nature, which equally belong to all men without exception; and, ſecondly, thoſe adventitious *rights*, which belong only to particular deſcriptions of men, as characteriſed, whether by particular talents, or by particular ſituations in civil life, but equally to all to whom theſe deſcriptions are applicable.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the original and inherent Rights of human Nature.

I. EVERY innocent member of ſociety has a *perfect right* to life, and to the integrity of his body. No principle is more deeply engraved in the conſtitution of all animals, than that of ſelf-preſervation. Every living creature has an abhorrence of diſſolution, and a ſtrong averſion from pain, which is a ſtimulant ſtill more powerful than the love of pleaſure; becauſe the removal of evil is the firſt ſtep towards enjoyment. Nothing excites the deteſtation of mankind more than an unprovoked attempt on life, or even violent aſſault, when no more is intended

tended than to wound, or to mutilate. Beſides, no man can be uſeful to ſociety, but in as far as his life is preſerved and ſecured, and bodily health and vigour are neceſſary to diſcharge the moſt important ſocial duties. The right to theſe is ſacred and inviolable, and, whenever they are unjuſtly aſſaulted, every man is entitled to defend them even by the ſlaughter of the aggreſſor, when every other means of ſecurity is removed. In this right is evidently included that of the preſervation of chaſtity when attacked.

II. Every man has a *perfect right* to the full fruits of his own honeſt ingenuity and labour. The Creator, by beſtowing on every perſon a certain portion of corporeal or mental ability, plainly intended that it ſhould be exerciſed. To this exerciſe men are impelled by the ſtimulants of

of pleaſure, and of pain. Reaſon, which enables mankind to anticipate futurity, ſuggeſts, from the recollection of former wants, the neceſſity of providing for them when they ſhall again recur. The natural productions, which may be rendered ſubſervient to the uſe of man, neceſſarily become the property of the firſt occupier, becauſe, if they were appropriated to none, they would be uſeleſs to all; at leaſt, ſuch of them as could afford no preſent uſe would remain neglected and unimproved. For no man will beſtow labour and time on that from which he is to receive no profit. Men are ſtrongly affected by a tender ſolicitude for their offspring and near connections, to whom they wiſh to impart a ſhare of their ſuperfluities during life, and, at death, to tranſmit their entire poſſeſſions. They are inflamed with a thirſt of honour and applauſe, and eager

to obtain them by the diſplay of uſeful, of elegant, or of ſublime, talents. Beſides, while men mutually ſupply each other with what they want, for an equivalent, ſociety is more cloſely cemented by a conſtant interchange of the various products of induſtry, of art, and of wealth; and, by the different conditions of men in point of fortune, opportunity is, as above obſerved, afforded for the exerciſe of many virtues, which could not otherwiſe exiſt. Man's double capacity, as an individual, and as a member of ſociety, is thus beſt preſerved, and his ſelfiſh, as well as his ſocial, propenſities are gratified. In fact, the ſame means that enable him moſt amply to indulge the former, alſo qualify him for ſatisfying moſt effectually the latter. By the exerciſe and cultivation of all his faculties, and by the improvement of the opportunities he enjoys,

joys, he beſt promotes his own private happineſs, and, in the ſame manner, he contributes moſt to the public good. As the perfection and ſolidity of all the parts of a building produce the ſolidity and perfection of the whole; ſo, in human ſociety, the proſperity of all its members in their different relations and circumſtances, produces the ſum of general happineſs. Notwithſtanding, therefore, the Utopian ſyſtem of a community of goods, which ſome political projectors, fixing their eyes on partial views of advantage and inconvenience, have endeavoured to recommend, and ſome ſmaller ſocieties have exemplified, it is undoubted that both public and private happineſs require that the right of property ſhould be ſacredly maintained.

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This *right* implies not only that poſſeſſions, already lawfully acquired, ſhould remain the inviolable property of their poſſeſſors, but alſo, that every honeſt and fair means of acquiring ſhould be equally open to all who are placed in the ſame circumſtances. It requires that a fair field be granted for the exerciſe of every uſeful and ornamental talent, and that its natural rewards be not with-held from it. Partial and narrow ſyſtems of policy, whereby the intereſt of a few is only conſulted, frequently cramp genius, and reſtrain induſtry, to the great prejudice of the common good.

Theſe, however, with whatever pretexts they may be coloured, are juſtly to be accounted violations of the ſacred right of property, which regards not only what men already honeſtly poſſeſs, but alſo what

what they may honeſtly obtain. The powers of their bodies, and the faculties of their minds, are the only property which men receive from nature. The exerciſe of theſe on the various natural productions, introduced the *adventitious* rights to theſe objects, and inheritance and contracts transferred them from their original proprietors to their ſucceſſors. But the foundation of all property is the common *right* to the earth, and its productions, which God has granted to mankind, together with the peculiar appropriation which every one made of ſome portion of theſe to himſelf, by the uſe of his mental and corporeal powers. It is abſurd, therefore, that *adventitious* rights ſhould be ſacred, while the *primary* means of acquiring theſe rights may be wantonly circumſcribed.

III.

III. All men have an equal *right* to a fair and honeſt character, till it has been proved that they have juſtly forfeited it. The love of character is deeply implanted in the human breaſt, and, as it can only be extinguiſhed with the extinction of integrity; ſo it is ſtrong in proportion to the ſtrength of virtuous and elevated ſentiments. The loſs of reputation, wounding one of the moſt lively feelings of the human heart, is one of the greateſt calamities in life. With the loſs of character many other evils are unavoidably connected, which, while they deſtroy the private happineſs of the individual, alſo fruſtrate his public utility. The ſucceſs of a perſon in the world, whether in the improvement of his fortune, or in the exerciſe of his abilities, depends greatly on the opinion which is entertained of his integrity. His uſefulneſs to ſociety depends chiefly

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on the confidence which his fellow men can repoſe in him. When any man's honeſty is queſtioned, his talents, far from being objects of complacency, are converted into ſources of terror, and mankind naturally combine in order to deprive them of thoſe opportunities of exertion, which ſeem to threaten their own ſafety.

Fame, or diſtinguiſhed conſideration and reſpect, belong only to eminent abilities, virtues, or ſtations. But the character of honeſty belongs equally to all who faithfully diſcharge every ſocial and civil obligation. Thoſe who, in every ſituation and circumſtance, whether of exaltation or of obſcurity, carry along with them purity of heart and integrity of conduct, meet on the equal footing of good men, and are equally entitled to all the enjoyment,

enjoyment, advantage, and conſideration, which that character juſtly claims, and cannot fail to poſſeſs, if not clouded by miſrepreſentation, or ſtained by calumny. The moſt illuſtrious abilities, or the moſt exalted ſtation, give not, of themſelves, a better title to a fair and ſpotleſs character, than the moſt moderate parts, or the moſt humble circumſtances. This *right*, till it is loſt by vicious action, extends to all conditions and ranks without exception.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The ſame Subject continued.

IV. EVERY man has a *perfect right* to *liberty*, or to act in whatever manner he pleaſes, provided he offers no injury to others, and violates no law enacted by the public authority of the civil ſociety to which he belongs. As ſoon as we form the notion of a rational agent, freedom immediately enters into the conception, and all happineſs and all virtue reſt on its foundation. For, as virtue conſiſts in the proper uſe of all our faculties, or in that conduct which is ſuited to the human nature and condition; ſo happineſs conſiſts in the poſſeſſion of thoſe enjoyments, of which nature has rendered

us capable, and which the right uſe of reaſon enables us to obtain. But how can he, who is deprived of the power of regulating his own actions, and of determining and directing his purſuits, either exert his faculties in ſuch a manner as is beſt adapted to their ends, or purſue thoſe enjoyments, with the greateſt vigour, to which he has aſſigned the higheſt value; how can he, who is ſubjected to the arbitrary will of another, contribute his portion to the common order and felicity; which reſults from the combined efforts of all directed to this glorious and comprehenſive end—from the combined exertions of knowledge, wiſdom, ſkill, ingenuity, dexterity, art, labour, reſolution, and vigour, ſhared among all the members of the ſocial body? Suppreſs the juſt exertion of any of theſe ſeparate portions, juſt ſo much is cut off from the general perfection

perfection and happineſs, and, while individuals are oppreſſed, the public ſuffers. Subject them to the arbitrary will of one, or of a few, all the light, and invention, and energy, which reſult from the free, but well regulated, efforts of all acting in harmonious concert are gone—all that variety of talent, of deſign, of purſuit, and of operation, which embelliſh, and improve, and ſtrengthen, human ſociety, is extinguiſhed—and the whole ſocial maſs, ſubordinated to one feeble and impotent will, ever influenced by narrow and contracted views, or by cloudy paſſions, either pines in a paſſive lethargy, or, if it is called into action by extraordinary ſtimulants, exhauſts its ſtrength by its efforts, while their produce is wholly drawn off by the privileged part; ſimilar to thoſe aged trunks on which we behold a few of the higher branches retaining their ſap

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and verdure, while the tree itſelf is rotten, and ſinking ſpeedily to duſt. Thus the preſervation of liberty is neceſſary to the attainment of public, as well as of private, felicity; nor can it ever be ſuppoſed that any human being, whoſe judgment is ſound, and who has not been corrupted by long habits of ſervitude, would either explicitly or tacitly relinquiſh what is neceſſary to every enjoyment of human nature, and without which ſociety itſelf is his greateſt curſe. In ſhort, liberty and human nature are inſeparable; to deſtroy the former, is to annihilate the latter—is to annihilate every notion of duty, and virtue, and happineſs, beyond what is merely ſenſual and brutiſh.

It is no wonder, then, that the love of freedom ſhould be ſtrong and vigorous in the breaſt, in proportion to the elevation of

of ſentiment, the ſenſe of honour, the regard for virtue, with which each individual is endowed, and that, by every generous and feeling ſoul, ſlavery ſhould be deemed the greateſt of human evils. Baſe, indeed, and corrupted, and broken by habits of ſervile ſubjection, muſt that man be, who can conſider himſelf as the property of his fellow creature, and feels no indignation at the tyrant who reduces him to this deſpicable condition, and who, degrading the rational creation of God, which he has firſt debaſed in his own ſoul, outrages heaven while he domineers upon earth. Few of mankind are ſo degenerate as to have loſt all ſenſe of liberty, and of the native dignity of man. For although they may ſubmit in ſilence to a deſpot, yet they abhor him in their hearts; and, when they can do it with ſafety, would lay hold of the firſt oppor-

tunity

tunity of ſhaking off the yoke. The names of maſter and ſlave annihilate all claims of duty, all voluntary offerings of affection, and exhibit man to man in a ſtate of hoſtility, where power is the only right, and terror the only obligation *.

Not-

* From theſe conſiderations it may be eſtabliſhed as a certain truth, that arbitrary governments, in whatever hands they may be placed, can never effectually ſecure the happineſs of mankind. With whatever wiſdom and goodneſs a prince may be endowed, it is impoſſible, from the narrowneſs of the human mind, that his views can extend to every department of civil ſociety; and he will be unavoidably expoſed to impoſition from ſome quarter or other. His adminiſtration, of conſequence, can never be marked with that extenſive beneficence, which reſults from forms of government which are calculated to collect into one point the wiſdom, ingenuity,

Notwithſtanding this averſion to ſervitude, and this love of freedom, ſo ſtrongly implanted in the human breaſt, it muſt be confeſſed, that there is in mankind both an aſtoniſhing propenſity to tyrannize, and a wonderful facility in ſubmitting to enormous power. The freedom which men claim to themſelves, they are not willing to grant to others, and the principle which inſpires the wiſh of independence, produces the exerciſe of oppreſſion. The love of pre-eminence and power rejects competition and equality; fond attachment

genuity, and vigour, which are diffuſed through the whole ſocial body. Beſides, as it is the intention of civil ſociety to promote the happineſs of all its members, it is impoſſible that its ends can be obtained, when the ſenſe of freedom, which is ſo eſſential an ingredient of human felicity, is either completely extinguiſhed, or deprived of its enjoyments.

attachment to one's own opinions ſtimulates men to preſcribe them as rules to others; poſſeſſion conſtantly aims at enlarging its bounds; elevation and authority have a perpetual tendency upwards, and, in their aſcent, depreſs thoſe parts through which they move—the generality of mankind, long accuſtomed to admire ſplendour and wealth, or eminent talents, readily ſubmit to their dominion; and voluntary homage often begins the ſubjection, which is at laſt exacted as a right. Habits of ſervitude debilitate the ſenſe of freedom, and the rigours of oppreſſion are frequently neceſſary to rouſe it. It is thus that the love of independence ſtimulates to encroach on the rights of others, and that ſuch encroachment is ſo frequently ſucceſsful.

On

On this account, all civil liberty is limited by theſe two conditions, abſtinence from injury to others, and ſubmiſſion to the laws enacted by the authority of political ſociety. Whoever injures others is not a free man, but a tyrant, and, if he is free, others are ſlaves *. As it is the grand deſign of civil ſociety to ſecure men from that injuſtice and violence which would ſoon ſubject all to the moſt powerful, it is neceſſary that the public authority ſhould circumſcribe the actions of each individual. While all are equally ſubject to this authority, and the collective power of the whole community is centered in this point, it follows as a neceſſary conſequence of that equality, which conſiſts in the relation that all equally bear to the

* Hence the propriety of the inſcription LIBERTAS on the priſons of Genoa. See Rouſſeau—Contrat Social—and Howard on Priſons.

ſocial body, that the actions of each ſhould be directed and limited by this relation. No member is ſubject to another, conſidered as a member, but every member is ſubject to the whole in its collective capacity, and, when this capacity is tranſferred to any part, or to any number of parts of the ſocial body, theſe, deriving their pre-eminence and authority from the whole ſociety, have a right to govern all its members, while, in every inſtance in which they appear as members themſelves, and act, not in a public, but in a private, capacity, they are equally ſubject to the common will, expreſſed by public laws, with all the other members of the community. In civil ſociety, it is this alone that maintains that equality which ſubſiſts among all its different members, notwithſtanding the diverſities which fortune, rank, or talents, have introduced. For,

as theſe only diverſify the manner in which each is to contribute his portion to the public good; ſo, when all are equally ſubject to common laws, all are levelled by this common ſubjection, and every one is reſtricted to that line of conduct, which is neceſſary for the preſervation and welfare of the political ſyſtem. Unlimited freedom is unattainable not only in civil ſociety, but in every ſpecies of aſſociation whatever, becauſe the actions of every individual of the ſociety are limited by the actions of all the reſt, and by the general deſign and conditions of aſſociation itſelf. The grand deſign of every ſocial union is to obtain the co-operation of all its members for the common good. It is hence incumbent on every one of them, ſo to regulate his conduct, as to contribute to the end propoſed. Nay, perfect liberty, if, by that term, we underſtand the unreſtrained

ſtrained indulgence of every deſire and propenſity, is as inconſiſtent with the rational conſtitution of each individual, as it is with the principles of civil union. For there is an order eſtabliſhed by nature among all our deſires and paſſions; and reaſon is given both to diſcover and to maintain it. As the violator of civil order ceaſes to be a citizen, and becomes a public enemy, ſo he who violates the order of the moral and rational nature ceaſes to be a man, degenerates into a brute, and is the deſtroyer of his own happineſs. As a man, he only is free, who, delivered from the yoke of paſſion, freely follows the dictates of his nobler faculties, and indulges every natural propenſity in conſiſtency with mental order. In like manner, civil ſociety is free, when delivered from arbitrary power, in whatever ſhape it may exiſt, all its members

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are placed under the empire and dominion of laws, enforcing the grand principles of political union, and equally binding on the legiſlators themſelves as on the people. If any are raiſed above law, or enjoy privileges and prerogatives, which have no relation to the public good, and are burthenſome to the community, in proportion as they are advantageous to the poſſeſſors of them, the principles of civil union are oppoſed, political equality is ſubverted, and oppreſſion, more or leſs grievous according to the degree of ſuch inequality, is introduced.

As the limitation of law is inſeparable from the liberty to which every citizen has an inconteſtible right; ſo this *right* implies that, in every inſtance, neither contrary to law, nor injurious to others, every innocent perſon, who has reached the

the years of maturity, and has not voluntarily ſubjected his actions to the controul of others, ſhould enjoy the power of acting as he pleaſes. Perſons of ſound judgment, and of generous ſentiments, will, in the uſe of this freedom, conſult not only their own pleaſure and advantage, but alſo the felicity of all to whom their influence may extend. Their purſuits will be characteriſed by a dignity and beneficence, which will point them out as the ornaments of ſociety, and the objects of general admiration and gratitude. Such will find their moſt delightful enjoyments in their own higheſt improvement, and in their moſt extenſive utility to others. Men of inferior capacity, or of a meaner turn of mind, will chiefly devote themſelves to ſenſual pleaſures, and to ſelfiſh purſuits; and thus with-hold from the public a great deal of benefit which they might otherwiſe

wiſe contribute. On this account, however, they are not to be deprived of their liberty, as long as they remain within the bounds of that innocence which, however deficient in a moral and religious light, is ſufficient for the maintenance of public peace, and of civil and political order. They are not amenable to human, but to divine juſtice; and muſt be called to account, not in the preſent, but in a future, world. Argument, perſuaſion, and example, may be employed; and every good man will uſe them to the utmoſt of his power, in order to diffuſe virtue and happineſs among his ſpecies. But to uſe violence for this purpoſe, is both to diſappoint the end, and to exhibit an inſtance of that folly which is reprobated in others. Men may be conſtrained to be harmleſs and juſt, but not to be virtuous and happy!

In the right of liberty is included the free uſe of private judgment in every thing relative to the regulation of conduct, and eſpecially to religion, as well as the free communication of ſentiment within the bounds above ſtated. It is vain to think of enjoying liberty of action, if the opinions by which action is to be directed are not alſo free. In fact, the right of private judgment cannot be alienated or wreſted from any human being by any power on earth. The mind of man, conſtituted free by its Creator, will ever remain ſo, in ſpite of every endeavour to enſlave it. Ignorance may darken, prejudice reſtrain, or corruption pervert, its powers; ſtill the opinions which it really embraces, are ſuch, as appear to it the beſt, according to the light which it enjoys. But to conceive any mortal adopting an opinion, for which he perceives no ground, is the moſt glaring

glaring contradiction—is to ſuppoſe him admitting and rejecting at once the ſame propoſitions. With regard to religion, in particular, the right of private judgment, and the freedom of conſcience, are to be maintained, as neceſſarily connected with the equality of all men, above eſtabliſhed. For, although religion ever has been, and ever muſt be, the ſtrongeſt bond of ſociety; yet the ſtrength of this bond depends on the united evidence of the religious opinions which are adopted, and on the ſincerity with which they are embraced. It is only when religious opinions are both true in themſelves, and ingenuouſly profeſſed, that they can exert any auſpicious influence on the actions of men.

Now, to perceive truth is the operation of the underſtanding. To embrace it with

becoming zeal, and to obey its dictates with undeviating conſtancy, is the operation of the heart. The underſtanding may be enlightened by reaſon, the heart may be affected by perſuaſion, and, in order that either may be produced, perfect freedom is neceſſary. To convince or to perſuade by violence, is the greateſt of abſurdities, is a manifeſt impoſſibility; and, when there is neither conviction nor perſuaſion, where can religion ſubſiſt? Place it where it can only reſide—in the underſtanding and the heart; it eludes all conſtraint. Remove it from this habitation, it loſes its ſalutary influence.

As religion, therefore, muſt, from its very nature, be free, no man can have any right to dictate to the conſcience of another. All men are equally entitled to ſerve God, and all are equally bound to

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ſerve him *in ſpirit and in truth.* No man can ſerve him with another's ſpirit; and no man can diſcern truth with another's underſtanding. To ſubject religion to conſtraint is, of conſequence, to deſtroy its eſſence, and to annihilate its ſalutary tendency. Enthuſiaſm and bigotry, whoſe character it is to erect their own opinions as ſtandards for all the world, and to violate the rights of conſcience, never fail, if they are ſucceſsful, to give birth to hypocriſy, as the heir to their uſurped dominion. Hence it is eaſy to account for the ſmall influence which religious opinions have on the conduct of their profeſſors, while pure and undefiled religion ought naturally to produce the moſt ſalutary effects not only in rendering men *wiſe unto ſalvation*, but in forming them to the practice of every ſocial and civil virtue. Religion is either believed to be ſome-

thing

thing very different from what it is, to conſiſt merely in forms and ceremonies; in which caſe it has either no effect at all on moral conduct, or a very pernicious one—or men are conſtrained to profeſs what they do not believe; by which their hearts are corrupted, and their actions and ſentiments are at conſtant variance. The glory of God is thus promoted by defacing his image on the human ſoul, and by transforming his *reaſonable ſervice* into childiſh pageantry and inſignificant pomp. Beſides, if any ſet of men aſſume to themſelves the power of preſcribing to others in religious matters, others may, with as good a title, do the ſame whenever they obtain the power. True religion may thus be ſuppreſſed and deſtroyed, without its profeſſors having any plea for its defence which is not equally competent to the moſt abſurd ſuperſtition.

While

While men thus domineer in religious matters, according as they poſſeſs the power, all religious improvement is precluded; the wiſeſt and moſt pious of men may be obliged to ſubmit, in obſequious ſilence, to the moſt ignorant and impious; and ſuperſtition, in all its hideous forms, is put on the ſame footing, and enjoys the ſame advantages for its maintenance and propagation, with divine revelation itſelf. This right of freedom of judgment carries along with it that of free communication of ſentiment, within the limitations above laid down. As there is in man a ſtrong natural propenſity to communicate his feelings and ſentiments to others, ſo the faculty by which he is chiefly enabled to communicate them is one of the moſt powerful bonds of ſociety, and one of the chief inſtruments of its improvement. By ſuppreſſing this freedom of communication,

tion, the natural equality of men is deſtroyed. Thoſe from whom it is wreſted are degraded from the condition of members of the community, and, being ſtripped of this priviledge, may be prevented from contributing that portion to the public good which it might enable them to afford. How much the improvement and felicity of mankind depend on the free diffuſion of knowledge, is too evident to require any proof. Nor is it leſs certain that ignorance and prejudice, ever delighting in darkneſs, becauſe their Laponian eyes are too weak to endure the light, are extremely deſirous of excluding it from whatever quarter it may ſhine. They endeavour, therefore, violently to extinguiſh the lamp of reaſon, and to ſilence the voice of truth. If they ſucceed, all the evils of barbariſm are perpetuated; if the precious right of free communication

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of opinion is maintained, private as well as public happineſs is the reſult.

But, if men embrace and profeſs opinions with regard to religion, morals, or politics, the moſt groſsly falſe and erroneous, are ſuch ſyſtems to be tolerated, and not rather proſcribed, as effrontive to God, and pernicious to men? The firſt inquiry muſt be, whether ſuch opinions tend to overturn the principles of civil ſociety, and to diſturb its order and peace. If any are ſo fooliſh, or ſo wicked, as to entertain ſentiments ſubverſive of thoſe fundamental truths on which the mutual obligations of men, and the practice of all virtue, and civil ſociety itſelf, are founded; ſuch may be juſtly conſtrained to abſtain from the propagation of them, or to remove from the ſociety of which they are members; or, if they obſtinately refuſe

refuſe to comply with a requiſition which ſelf-preſervation dictates, may be juſtly puniſhed in order to deter others from imitating their example. But as ſuch fundamental truths are few, and univerſally acknowledged, ſo they ought not to be unneceſſarily multiplied in order to ſuppreſs the exerciſe of private judgment, or connected with other points in which diverſity of opinion, far from being pernicious, conduces to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge, by pouring in new light from various inquiry and intelligence. Beſides, as no ſincere profeſſor of any ſyſtem of religion or morals really believes it impious and pernicious, but, on the contrary, entertains the higheſt opinion of its excellence, ſuch ought rather to be convinced by argument, than deſtroyed by perſecution, and, while he abſtains from actions injurious to others, it is unjuſt to

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treat him with ſeverity and violence. It is undeniable that bigotry, and ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, whether religious or civil, have often produced the moſt direful calamities in the world. But it is to be obſerved, that this has entirely proceeded from the principle againſt which I am now contending, namely, the right of any man to dictate to the conſcience of another. For if, on the moſt important of all ſubjects, men ſupported their cauſe by argument and perſuaſion only, ſuperſtition, bigotry, and error, would ſoon be driven from the field, and true religion and pure morality obtain a deciſive victory in every part of the world. But while different ſects and parties mutually repreſent each other as the enemies of God and man, and connect, with every ſpeculative opinion, the moſt important conſequences to the temporal, as well as the eternal, inte-

reſts of mankind, rancour, and hatred, and malevolence, ſoon burſt into the flames of the moſt virulent animoſity, perſecution appears in her moſt hideous forms, and the cauſe of God, and the intereſts of mankind, are aſſumed as pretexts for indulging the moſt ferocious paſſions of the human breaſt! If, on the one hand, therefore, profeſſions evidently ſubverſive of the fundamental principles of ſociety have no claim to toleration; ſo, on the other, the greateſt caution is to be uſed not to claſs, under this head, opinions which have no connection with the intereſts of civil ſociety, but regard only theological or philoſophical ſpeculation. I mean not that erroneous opinions are always free from blame, becauſe it is an undoubted fact that error is not always the reſult of weakneſs of judgment, but more frequently ſtill of pride, of obſtinacy, or

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of negligence. But as no man is maſter of another's conſcience, ſo no man can claim to himſelf the judgment of this point with regard to another, but in as far as opinion is manifeſted by action. *To his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth, who art thou that judgeſt another?*

The right of liberty, which I have illuſtrated at conſiderable length, becauſe it is not generally underſtood, includes, firſt, perſonal liberty; ſecondly, liberty of action; thirdly, liberty of conſcience; fourthly, liberty of communication of ſentiment.

To all theſe modifications of liberty within the limitations above ſtated, every member of ſociety has an equal *right*; nor can any diſcrimination of rank, of fortune, or of abilities, entitle any one to any privilege

vilege in theſe reſpects, which is not equally due to every human being who is poſſeſſed of a ſound mind, has reached the years of maturity, and has not voluntarily ſubjected himſelf to the controul of another.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

That it is the intereſt of Governments to preſerve inviolate the Right of Liberty, as above explained.

IT is a falſe notion to ſuppoſe that governments are moſt firmly eſtabliſhed when the liberty of the ſubject, or of the citizen, is deſtroyed. It will, in fact, be found, on mature conſideration, that it is as much the intereſt of governours, as of the governed, that this grand right be religiouſly obſerved in all its branches. It is true that no government can ſubſiſt in the midſt of licentiouſneſs. But, *licentiouſneſs* and *deſpotiſm* are only different names for the ſame thing. *Licentiouſneſs* is

is a contempt of law, and right, and juſtice—is the dominion of paſſion, and caprice, and violence. And, what other definition can be given of *deſpotiſm?* In the midſt of that anarchy which licentiouſneſs introduces, thoſe who have acquired the greateſt influence over the multitude lead them at their pleaſure, and uſurp the moſt deſpotic power over the reſt of the community. This power continues as long as the favour that produced it, and then gives place to another dominion, equally capricious and cruel. Society is thus agitated with unceaſing convulſions, till it ſink under abſolute power, or a happy combination of circumſtances eſtabliſh the equal and impartial government of law, and of authority founded on its baſis.

Deſpotiſm

Deſpotiſm produces ſimilar effects, tho' in an inverted courſe. It levels all to exalt *one*, or *a few*; and, acknowledging no title but force, tramples under foot every claim of right which is oppoſed to its dominion. But, as all power, when ſeparated from juſtice, muſt fall before ſuperior power contending with it; and as ſlaves, whenever they have the courage to reſiſt, and the ſagacity to combine againſt, their maſter, muſt inevitably cruſh him; ſo, every deſpot ſhares all the terror he inſpires, and *joins trembling with his commands*. Knowing himſelf the enemy of mankind, he can place no confidence in their affection, and make no appeal to their juſtice. When his power begins to totter, the fear that reſtrains them is removed, and the intereſt that engaged them in his favour paſſes over to the quarter where it can be better promoted.

moted. While flattery is endeavouring to lull him to ſecurity, treachery is machinating his deſtruction; and he is often overwhelmed before he has time to prepare either for reſiſtance or for eſcape *.

To this ſituation, diſmal even in its greateſt pre-eminence and ſplendour, all abuſes

* It is wonderful how nearly deſpotiſm, and pure democracy, approach each other. They are both the government of the mob, at leaſt on many occaſions. In pure democracy this is ſufficiently evident. Deſpotiſm can only be maintained by the army; and, when the army is numerous, it can depoſe the Sovereign at pleaſure. The Roman Emperors were ſucceſſively elected, dethroned, and butchered, by the Pretorian guards. The Turkiſh Sultan is at the mercy of the Janiſſaries.—See Gibbon's Hiſtory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. i. chap. viii. p. 309. 8vo edition.

abuſes of power inſenſibly lead. Smaller violations of right are eaſily born, becauſe they are not generally, or ſeverely, felt. This ſucceſs tempts to greater oppreſſion, while the luſt, and the advantages of power, ſtimulate to extend its limits, and to inſure its duration. Oppreſſion, at laſt, becomes neceſſary to its own ſupport, and the fear of redreſs ſuggeſts the accumulation of injuſtice. Abuſes grow intolerable; violent reſiſtance appears the only means of relief; and the moment which advances oppreſſion to its completion becomes the period of its overthrow. For, when the bodies of men are neither effeminated by luxury, nor enfeebled by climate, nor their minds brutified by ignorance, they cannot fail, ſooner or later, to ſhake off the yoke of tyranny, and to break her ſceptre in pieces. As in ſuch circumſtances, however, their

lethargic paſſiveneſs is diſpelled by extraordinary ſtimulants, and the furious paſſions of reſentment and revenge are violently rouſed, the moſt atrocious acts of cruelty are exerciſed towards their oppreſſors, or thoſe whom they conceive to have been joined with them in the odious combination againſt their ſpecies; and the vindication of violated right is thus often accompanied with the moſt flagrant injuſtice. In this manner human ſociety, which ſhould be the ſafeguard of human happineſs, ſo frequently exhibits alternate ſcenes of rigorous deſpotiſm, and of furious anarchy; of injuſtice in the maintenance of uſurped power, and of violence in the ſubverſion of it; of groſs abuſes in the adminiſtration of governments, and of lamentable calamities in the reformation of them. The only ſtable government is that which is founded on

equal

equal liberty, limited by law, adminiſtered with moderation, ſupported by the combined intereſts of the whole political body, and diſplayed in the glorious effects of internal order and external ſecurity—of improving induſtry, civilization, and virtue!

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of Rights peculiar to certain Stations and Abilities.

BESIDES thoſe rights, equally belonging to all, which have been above illuſtrated, there are others, which, although they are founded on the diſtinctions of rank and fortune, or on the general ſubordination which civil ſociety requires, are nevertheleſs deducible from that notion of equality eſtabliſhed in the firſt part of this Eſſay.

I. Thoſe who are placed in the higher ſtations, and inveſted with offices of government and command, as they owe the diſcharge of theſe important functions to the

the public, are entitled, from this very conſideration, to the obedience of thoſe who are ſubjected to their authority. As members of the ſocial body they are bound to promote its intereſt by the moſt effectual means in their power. The peculiar direction of this utility is determined by their offices themſelves. This line cannot be purſued without the legal obedience and ſubmiſſion of the reſt of the community. Hence that equality of obligation which binds the former to the juſt and zealous diſcharge of their functions, binds alſo the latter to a ready and chearful ſubjection to their authority.

II. When the neceſſary balance of the political body, or that encouragement of merit which tends ſo powerfully to promote its higheſt intereſt, have raiſed a certain claſs of men to certain honours and privileges;

privileges; theſe are, by that equality itſelf which ſubſiſts among all in their common relation to the public good, entitled to the advantages, and reſpect which are annexed to their ſtation, which the public welfare requires ſhould be maintained in becoming ſplendour and dignity.

When, by political conſtitutions, peculiar marks of diſtinction are aſſigned to eminent talents and virtues, thoſe who diſplay them have a juſt claim on the public to the diſtinction which is their reward, and on every member of the community for the regard which that diſtinction requires. Views of public intereſt ſuggeſt ſuch diſtinctions as incentives to merit, in order to extract from all the members of the ſocial body the greateſt poſſible ſum of exertion, and to diffuſe its influence over the whole. It is juſt, therefore, that

thoſe who contribute in the moſt diſtinguiſhed degree to the common welfare ſhould enjoy a proportionable ſhare of honour and advantage, adapted to the peculiar manner in which their utility has been diſplayed. To deprive them of this would be to deſtroy their relation to the community, and that *equality* which conſiſts in the common obligation of all to contribute to its benefit, and to receive a proportionate return.

III. When riches, acquired by honeſt induſtry, or enjoyed in virtue of thoſe laws which perpetuate property, whatever be its value and extent, enable their poſſeſſors to relieve want, to ſooth affliction, to diffuſe around them a ſpirit of improvement, to encourage induſtry, and to make their ſuperfluity circulate through the general maſs of the community, they confer

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on the opulent a juſt title to conſideration and influence, in proportion to the ſuperior benefits they beſtow on all who are placed within the ſphere of their action. It would be as unjuſt to deny them this conſideration, as it would be to with-hold from a day-labourer his hire, or from a good man the eſteem which is his due.

IV. The ſame conſiderations give to the inferior ranks of ſociety, and to the community in general, an equal right to demand that all delegated power and authority, as all civil power undoubtedly is, be employed ſolely for the ends for which it was conferred, and that all honorary diſtinctions be neither beſtowed on the undeſerving, nor perverted to the purpoſes of pride, of inſolence, and of oppreſſion. The community at large has a right to demand that the legiſlative power be conſtantly

conſtantly directed by views of general utility, and not by partial ſyſtems which injure and diſtreſs the whole by throwing all advantages on one ſide of the political body; that the executive power never exceed its legal bounds, and, by an impartial adminiſtration of juſtice, maintain all in the equal enjoyment of their rights; that rank be ſupported with dignity, and tempered with the affability and condeſcenſion becoming every citizen; that wealth be not abuſed to introduce and foment profligacy of manners, or to abet injuſtice; and that talents be not perverted to diſſeminate opinions and principles ſubverſive of virtue, and pernicious to ſociety.

V. All men have an equal, though imperfect, *right* to thoſe offices of humanity which, while they coſt the performers of

 them

them little trouble, are the ſweeteners of ſocial intercourſe; and to the compaſſion and relief of others, proportioned to their condition and circumſtances, when they are overpowered by diſtreſs and calamity. This *right*, it is true, cannot be ſo defined as to admit of any individual's claiming a determined portion of the good offices of any of his fellow men; nay, the fulfilment of its obligations muſt, from its very nature, be left to every one's judgment and feelings. But, as men aſſociate for their mutual benefit and comfort, as humanity is interwoven with the human conſtitution, and as compaſſion with diſtreſs is one of the ſtrongeſt feelings of our nature, it is undoubted that, to every ſituation which is calculated to call theſe feelings into action, a certain *right* is annexed to expect and require them, and a general obligation lies on all to advance the happineſs

pineſs of their fellow men by every means in their power. As the ordinary offices of civility muſt vary according to the different conditions and ranks of men; ſo the compaſſion which is due to their diſtreſs, and the relief which it prompts to afford, muſt be greatly affected by the ſame conſiderations. For, as a loſs which would ruin a man in narrow circumſtances, would not at all affect a perſon of affluent fortune; ſo, on the other hand, there are ſituations which would appear to one in obſcure ſtation highly eligible, which would overwhelm thoſe of a more elevated condition with inexpreſſible dejection and anguiſh. What would ſeem to one perſon a ſingular benefit, would, to another in different circumſtances, either be no benefit at all, or interpreted into a cruel affront. All then have an equal right to offices of humanity and kind-

neſs;

neſs; but the degree and manner of theſe offices muſt be determined by the circumſtances and rank of the perſons towards whom they are exerciſed. This proportion is required by equality itſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

General Inferences from the whole of this Book.

I HAVE now endeavoured to enumerate, and eſtabliſh, as conciſely as poſſible, the different *rights* that flow from the natural *equality* of men, conſidered in its proper light. Some of theſe are ſo eſſentially neceſſary to human happineſs, that they cannot be violated without overturning the firſt principles of ſociety. They are the fundamental articles of the ſocial compact, for the maintenance of which mankind, if not explicitly, yet tacitly, and by the inſtitution of civil ſociety itſelf, have ſtipulated to relinquiſh ſome portion of their natural liberty, and to commit,

to a certain number of its members, the concentrated power of the community for the benefit of all. Civil ſociety annihilates not the natural rights of men, but fences, ſecures, and improves them. By circumſcribing them by the limits which the political union requires, it condenſes, as it were, their eſſence, and gives it greater ſtrength and ſolidity.

Others of theſe rights flow, indeed, from the ſame principles; but, as they cannot be ſo preciſely aſcertained as to eſtabliſh an exact and definite claim in every particular caſe, they may admit of a leſs rigorous obſervance, without wounding the vitals of human aſſociation. If thoſe of the former claſs conſtitute the foundations of the ſocial fabric, thoſe of the latter indicate the means of its conſolidation and higheſt improvement. When

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all theſe rights are maintained, according to their reſpective importance, as far as the human condition will admit, ſociety is flouriſhing and happy, under whatever form of political adminiſtration it may be placed. There are, it is true, certain forms of government, which, as their conſtitution itſelf threatens even the moſt important of them with deſtruction, are, therefore, eſſentially bad. But, there are others which, maintaining the grand prerogatives of human nature, have a direct tendency to advance ſocial happineſs, tho' in different degrees. Under ſuch governments mankind may always conſider it as a fortunate circumſtance to be placed. That government is the beſt in which all the inherent rights of human nature are inviolably ſecured, legal authority is maintained, and reſtricted to its objects, the power of the ſtate is employed to promote the

the general happineſs; and *inequality* itſelf tends to preſerve *equality* of law, and *parity* of obligation, among all the members of the community.

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ESSAY, &c.

BOOK III.

X.

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ESSAY, &c.

BOOK III.

What are the Duties reſulting from the Equality of Mankind?

CHAP. I.

Preliminary Obſervations.

THE diviſion of my ſubject, on which I now enter, opens a field comprehending every ſocial and civil duty, becauſe every duty of this claſs ſuppoſes reciprocal obligations founded on the terms of equality, on which men aſſociate. Nay,

as

as in order to diſcharge the duties we owe to our fellow men, and fellow citizens, it is neceſſary to reſtrain our ſelfiſh paſſions within juſt bounds; and, as the Divine authority ſanctions every human obligation, and religion is the firmeſt bond of ſociety, the duties of piety, as well as thoſe of ſelf-command and moderation, might be inculcated on the ſame principles. Hence, a complete treatiſe of practical morality might be produced. But, as this Eſſay has already ſwelled beyond the bounds which I at firſt propoſed to it, I ſhall confine myſelf to the conſideration of theſe duties which directly flow from the principles of equality already eſtabliſhed, and from the rights which they confirm. The duties now to be illuſtrated will, therefore, correſpond to the two grand diviſions of *rights* explained in the preceding Book *.

CHAP.

* Ch. II. III. IV. VI.

CHAP. II.

All Men equally bound to reſpect the primitive Rights of human Nature.

AS the inherent *rights* of human nature are the fundamental articles of the ſocial compact, for the maintenance and preſervation of which civil ſociety is conſtituted, every violation of theſe is not only an atrocious injury to the individual who ſuffers it, but is a direct attack on ſociety itſelf. No pre eminence or prerogative whatever can give a title to deprive an innocent member of the community of thoſe rights, without which his exiſtence is either precarious or miſerable; and every attempt to infringe them is, on the part of the aggreſſor, a renunciation

of

of his ſocial advantages, becauſe theſe advantages are inſeparably connected with the obſervance of the *rights* now under conſideration. It is to ſubſtitute force in the place of *right*, and, of conſequence, to acknowledge that ſuperior power is entitled to make him ſubmit in his turn. This principle, carried in every inſtance as far as it will go, tears aſunder every ſocial and civil tie, tramples under foot every dictate of juſtice, and introduces a ſtate of unceaſing hoſtility and violence.

Indeed, ſo eſſential are ſome of thoſe *rights* to the very exiſtence of ſociety, that they are fenced and ſecured by the ſtrongeſt civil ſanctions. Life and property cannot be directly attacked without expoſing the aggreſſor to the ſevereſt penalties. But in what a variety of indirect ways may injuries of this nature be offered, without

without any riſk of human puniſhment? Life is deſtroyed not only by the dagger, or by the bowl, but by with-holding the means of its ſupport. Life is not ſo deſirable on its own account, as on account of the enjoyments which it furniſhes. Property is withdrawn from its lawful poſſeſſor, not only by robbery, or by theft, but alſo by every ſpecies of unfair commerce. Every deceitful practice, therefore, whereby advantage is taken, under whatever colour, of the ignorance or of the neceſſity of men, to deprive them of their property without an equivalent, is a violation of the right of property, and every oppreſſive act which cuts off or diminiſhes the means of a comfortable ſubſiſtence, is an attack upon life itſelf. To reduce men to the diſmal neceſſity of dragging out exiſtence in miſery and contempt, to make them curſe the day of their birth,

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and ſigh for that of their diſſolution, to render the tendereſt of nature's ties an aggravation of diſtreſs; what is this but to ſpare life in order to perpetuate torment? And to this diſmal condition how great a portion of the human race is reduced—a condition more abject than that of the brute creation, which nature has provided with the neceſſary ſupply of their wants, and given them deſires for nothing more! Shall any rights whatever, derived wholly from political inſtitutions, founded, for the moſt part, in barbarous ignorance and tyrannic oppreſſion, be oppoſed to thoſe clear and permanent *rights* which the Creator has conferred on all men equally, by the gift of life itſelf, and by the natural faculties of providing for its ſupply! Shall he who cultivates the ſoil be deprived of an adequate ſhare of the fruits which his induſtry produces, and

pine

pine in want, while the labour of his hands feeds luxurious idleneſs? Shall the *right* of property be eſtabliſhed only for thoſe who contribute nothing to the general ſtock, but conſume and waſte what he induſtry of others has provided, and ſhall that property which nature has beſtowed on her children, in the faculties of their minds and of their bodies, be conſidered as a mark of degradation, and a badge of ſlavery?

How contrary are ſuch ſentiments, and the conduct they produce, to that juſt notion of equality above eſtabliſhed, which repreſents every human being as a conſtituent member of the ſocial body, and, in his peculiar ſtation, equally neceſſary, with every other, to the common welfare; which exhibits man to man as children of one common parent, as brethren connect-

ed no leſs by one common intereſt, than by one common origin, and diſcriminated, by different diſtinctions of occupation and place, merely that the general good may be more effectually advanced. For, although ſuch views of ſociety may, by ſome whoſe policy is but half wiſdom, be claſſed among the theories of moraliſts, or the viſions of divines, they are the only repreſentations that can ſtand the teſt of reaſon, or bear the eye of inquiry.

Equally incumbent, on all men, is the duty to reſpect the *right* which every innocent individual has to *character* and *liberty*. But, how little is this duty regarded? Civil laws cannot do ſo much for the ſecurity of the rights, to which it relates, as for thoſe of life and property; becauſe it is not ſo eaſy to define, in every caſe, their exact extent, and much more

is,

is, on that account, left to the diſcretion and virtue of individuals. That degree of character which is aſſaulted by open and direct calumny, may, indeed, be always exactly aſcertained, and every infraction of it become the ſubject of legal animadverſion. This is alſo the caſe with regard to perſonal liberty. But, in how many inſtances may a character be ruined, without its being in the power of the injured perſon to find any legal redreſs; and how much may one's juſt liberty be circumſcribed and infringed without any ground of legal complaint? The daily conduct of mankind towards one another, in theſe reſpects, is the ſtrongeſt evidence both of the neceſſity of a civil government, and of its inſufficiency for the ſecurity of human happineſs. It manifeſts the malevolent propenſities by which mankind are often actuated, and, of conſequence,

ſequence, the neceſſity of coercive power; and, ſince theſe evil propenſities burſt out on ſo many quarters, notwithſtanding the authority of laws, this evinces the great utility of philoſophical and religious inſtruction, which applies to the underſtanding and the heart, and, by purifying the ſource of action, renders conduct more conformable to human nature, and more conducive to human felicity.

Do unto others as you wiſh them to do unto you, is a maxim that anſwers every caſe in which we can have any intercourſe with our fellow men. It is founded on the equality of human nature, amidſt all the diverſities of condition and circumſtances. It takes, as the rule of conduct, the feelings of every individual, ſuppoſing his condition were exchanged with that of the perſon towards whom he acts. It could

could never, therefore, be a juſt ſtandard, if the ſame duties were not equally incumbent on all in the ſame circumſtances. Now, with reſpect to reputation and liberty, which every human being ſo warmly cheriſhes, and ſo eagerly purſues, this rule ought to have peculiar efficacy. Yet, in theſe reſpects, it is moſt ſhamefully and frequently violated. It is aſtoniſhing to obſerve the general averſion to reproach and cenſure, and the general propenſity to reproach and cenſure others; the high opinion which moſt people entertain of themſelves, and wiſh the world to entertain of them, and their inclination to think ill of others, and to undervalue and diminiſh their good qualities. It is natural to ſuppoſe, that, as the experience of diſtreſs renders men prone to compaſſion *, ſo the love of character, and averſion

* Haud ignara mali miſeris ſuccurrere diſco.

ſion from diſgrace, which operate ſo powerfully in every human breaſt, would render men delicate in inflicting, on others, thoſe pains which are ſo grievous to themſelves, and in depriving them of thoſe ſatisfactions which they account ſo delicious. But theſe ſenſations act, under the impulſe of ſelfiſhneſs, in a contrary manner. Men think that the reputation of others ſtands in the way of their own, and that *their* excellence cannot be exhibited unleſs thoſe interpoſing eminences be thrown down, and the public eye wholly fixed on themſelves. While men are thus employed in levelling each other, no real pre-eminence remains to any, and nothing is diſplayed, to every judicious eye, but one wide extent of malignity and corruption. Every one wiſhes his opinion of his neighbour to be believed; and his wiſh is granted. But the

fulfilment

fulfilment of this wiſh equally wounds the characters of all. The blemiſhes he diſcovers in another, or imputes to him, are acknowledged; thoſe which another lays to his charge meet with the ſame credit. Thus every one, by endeavouring to exalt himſelf at another's expence, only points out the means of his own depreſſion, and, by ſetting the example, provokes the reſt of mankind to uſe them. Such, however, is the faſcination of ſelf-love, that the generality of men ſuppoſe themſelves very little obnoxious to cenſure; and, while they are indulging the moſt vicious paſſions of the human heart, envy or revenge, they flatter themſelves with the vain notion that their turpitude is unobſerved. As often as I reflect on the prevalence of detraction, of obloquy, and of ſlander, I find it difficult to determine whether it proceeds more from

weakneſs

weakneſs or from malignity; whether it is more an object of contempt or of deteſtation. What can be more malignant than to delight in the deſtruction of one of the deareſt of human enjoyments? What more fooliſh and ridiculous than for a perſon to aſſault others, and to ſuppoſe that the attack will not be returned?

The ſame abſurdity and injuſtice is conſpicuous in the mutual conduct of men with regard to liberty. How few are ready on every occaſion to grant to others the ſame freedom which they take to themſelves! Such is the ſpirit of domination univerſally diffuſed, that what Pope limits only to one ſex, is equally applicable to both—*the love of pleaſure, and the love of power.* Indeed, the one neceſſarily draws after it the other. The love of pleaſure produces the deſire of the means of

of obtaining it, and of extending influence and power as far as poſſible. For why are men tyrants, but becauſe they wiſh freely to indulge their inclinations, unreſtrained by juſtice, unlimited by moderation? While ſelf-love, therefore, is the predominant principle of the human heart, tyranny will not be confined to thrones and dominions, to principalities and powers, but ſpread through every ſphere and condition of life. It is not ſo much the inclination as the power that is wanting; and the temper, which is overbearing and unjuſt in private life, would be a Nero if ſeated on a throne. Let us only conſider the fond attachment which moſt men have to their own opinions and mode of life, their eager deſire to impoſe them on others, their impatience of contradiction, their propenſity to ſquare the actions of other men by their own rule, their luſt of

homage and precedence, their eagerneſs to riſe above others, and to indulge their ambition in every little manner which their ſphere preſents to them, their reſentment of affronts and injuries, apparent as well as real, their ſelf-conceit and averſion from amendment—we behold the ſeeds of tyranny lurking in almoſt every human breaſt; and ſhall ceaſe to wonder that, when great power is poſſeſſed, it ſhould be ſo frequently abuſed. How ſeldom is the freedom of ſpeech and action enjoyed even in the freeſt ſtates of civil ſociety! Let any one recollect what paſſes before his eyes every day; let him conſider how often he is obliged to regulate his words, not ſo much by the internal ſentiments of his own heart, as by the opinions and prejudices of thoſe with whom he aſſociates, and his actions, not ſo much by the immutable rules of duty, as by the fictitious

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ſtandards of the world, and he will confeſs that none can enjoy the true freedom of a man, but he who has the fortitude to ſacrifice to this exalted privilege, his moſt valuable temporal intereſts, and his chief ſocial pleaſures. Prejudices born of ignorance, or of pride, are nouriſhed by education, ſtrengthened by intereſt, or ſupported by that ſelf-love which is humbled by the expoſition of them. Cuſtom and faſhion have eſtabliſhed arbitrary rules and forms, which, however contrary to reaſon, it is conſidered as unlawful, at leaſt, as highly ridiculous, to infringe. The man who preſumes to think, to ſpeak, or to act, differently from the generality, even in matters of ſingular importance to the common good, is looked upon as an unſocial ſavage being, who, ſeparating himſelf from his ſpecies, is entitled to no ſhare of their regard and affection.

fection. It is well, if he is not expoſed to the ſevereſt effects of reſentment and hatred.

Wealth and external dignity, although they cannot of themſelves introduce one ray of light into the underſtanding, or implant one virtue in the heart, aſſume the privilege of dictating in matters of taſte, of politics, of ſcience, of morality, and of religion, and of bearing down all who ſubſcribe not to their arbitrary decrees. The reſpect due to rank, and the influence which fortune juſtly claims, every man of ſenſe and of integrity will readily acknowledge and beſtow. But that a man's judgment ſhould be meaſured by his title, or his merit, weighed by his gold; that fortune and rank ſhould not only poſſeſs their rightful precedence, but alſo uſurp the honour which is equally due to genius

genius and learning, to wiſdom and virtue; that a ſenſible and honeſt man ſhould not dare to expreſs his ſentiments, becauſe they are repugnant to thoſe of another decorated with the badges of diſtinction, or poſſeſſed of a large eſtate; is ſuch a perverſion of nature, ſuch an infraction of liberty, as mankind could never be brought to endure but by thoſe habits of ſervility which luxurious effeminacy has introduced. It will be anſwered, that this freedom, every man who chooſes to uſe it, may enjoy. But at what expence? at the expence of incurring the keeneſt diſpleaſure of the exalted perſon whom he diſobliges, and of feeling his power employed to ruin him and his neareſt connections.

But, why complain of the exorbitant and tyrannical pretenſions of rank and fortune,

fortune, when genius, which has already ſecured fame, frequently exhibits the ſame dogmatical and oppreſſive ſpirit? How often have thoſe, whoſe literary character has already attracted the greateſt conſideration and reſpect, uſurped a dictatorial power both in converſation and writing, contradicted without argument, keenly reſented the ſmalleſt difference of opinion, even when their ſentiments were manifeſtly abſurd, ſhared out their approbation by the meaſure of flattery they received, and inflicted cenſure, not according to perſonal or literary merit, but according to the prejudice or diſguſt by which they were influenced. In reading the lives of ſome diſtinguiſhed geniuſes, I have found my indignation as much fired by their pride and inſolence, and by the tame ſubmiſſion with which they were born, as by the oppreſſion of civil deſpots,

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and the ſervility of the reſt of mankind. In fact, genius and reputation give as little title to domineer as fortune and rank. For, whatever mental ſuperiority a man may diſplay, he is inferior to others in many qualities, equally neceſſary to the common good as the talents he poſſeſſes. Brilliant powers are frequently counterbalanced by contemptible weakneſſes, and great virtues by ſhameful vices. In proof of this aſſertion, I might inſtance the lives of ſome of the greateſt literary characters.

As individuals are actuated by a tyrannical ſpirit, ſo nations claim to themſelves the prerogative of reducing to ſlavery others inhabiting a different climate, or diſtinguiſhed by a different colour of countenance. Ariſtotle, in that very book where he eſtabliſhes the grand principles

of

of a free government *, is not aſhamed to aſſert, that the Greeks were deſtined, by nature, to rule the other nations of the earth; and founds this right on their ſuperior genius and civiliſation. Had that philoſopher foreſeen the preſent ſtate of his own country, and that of thoſe nations whom he conſidered as appointed to continue barbarians to the end of time, he would have acknowledged the futility of his argument. But the nations of Europe, who have exchanged barbariſm for refinement, have adopted the ſame principle, and ſuppoſe that ſuperiority of art and policy carries along with it the right of oppreſſing thoſe whoſe ſtate is ſtill rude and uncultivated. The principles eſtabliſhed in this Eſſay ſufficiently evince that no pre-eminence of ſagacity, wiſdom, ingenuity, or ſtrength, can entitle any human

* Politic. lib. 1mo.

man being, or any ſociety of men, to deprive others of the inherent and unalienable rights of human nature.

But, ſince principles directly contrary to theſe influence the generality of mankind, the preſent ſtate of ſociety is perfectly conformable. As few men have the courage to ſacrifice their intereſt, their pleaſure, or their fame, to their regard for truth and juſtice, the great concern is to ſpeak and act, not as reaſon and virtue dictate, but as intereſted views, in conforming to the opinions, humours, and manners of others, may require. For, how is the favour of the greater part of men to be caught, but by adulation and ſervile reſpect? and what ſo efficacious for incurring their diſpleaſure, as that manly and generous conduct and converſation, which indicate leſs ſolicitude to ſecure fa-

vour than to enjoy ſelf-eſteem, a greater love of mankind than reſpect for individuals? Hence, moſt men have an opinion for every company they frequent, and change their ſentiments oftener than their dreſs. The art of pleaſing, reduced into ſyſtem, and practiſed by every one who aſſumes the character of politeneſs, has given the ſame ſhape and colouring to the manners of all; and thoſe prominent features, which characteriſe and diſtinguiſh, are rubbed off by the file of civility and faſhion. Politeneſs is making conſtant demands — propriety impoſing new laws—men are always the ſlaves of cuſtom, and ſeldom follow the bent of their own genius and temper. Society is a ſpecies of ſtage, on which the actors appear in their turns, and play their parts. The real character remains behind the ſcenes. The great conteſt is, who ſhall

act

act with the moſt powerful effect on the ſpectators, and produce the completeſt illuſion. He is, therefore, moſt applauded, and bears the higheſt price, who appears leaſt himſelf, and perſonates moſt ſucceſſfully the aſſumed character. Should an uncivilized ſon of nature be introduced into our European circles, he would, at firſt, conclude that humanity and benevolence had there fixed their abode. But, as ſoon as he was informed that all this was but ſcenery and ſtage effect, he would be uncertain whether moſt to admire the ſkill with which the repreſentation was conducted, or to deteſt the duplicity which could ſo completely aſſume the appearance of qualities, of which the reality was wanting *.

By

* See Rouſſeau, Diſcours ſur les Sciences et les Arts, p. 12.

By theſe different infractions of the original rights of man above mentioned, ſociety is reduced to its preſent unhappy condition, in which the Hobbeſian ſtate of nature appears in the midſt of civiliſation and refinement. The intereſts, the purſuits, and the paſſions of men conſtantly acting in oppoſition, inſpire, in the midſt of unceaſing competition, unremitting caution and ſolicitous jealouſy. The ſpecious maſk of civility and complaiſance is often aſſumed to conceal the moſt hoſtile deſigns. The language of nature is unknown, and the warm expreſſions of affection either fall to the ground deſtitute of all meaning, or are perverted to convey an ironical conception of contempt and diſlike *.

How

* Fugere pudor, verumque fideſque;
In quorum ſubiere locum, fraudeſque, dolique,
Inſidiaeque, et vis, et amor ſceleratus habendi.
Ovid. Metam. l. 1. v. 130.

How different would be the face of ſociety, if the juſt equality of mankind were duly conſidered, and the inherent rights of human nature reſpected as they ought! But this conſummation, devoutly to be wiſhed, will only take place, when men ſhall believe and practiſe Chriſtianity, and *do the will of their heavenly Father on earth, as it is done in Heaven.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Duties of thoſe who are placed in the inferior Stations of Life, or endowed with inferior Capacities and Powers.

IF the diſtribution of abilities illuſtrated in the firſt Book*, and a diverſity of ranks in ſociety, be beſt calculated to promote the happineſs, not only of the ſocial body in general, but of every individual that compoſes it, how iniquitous and unreaſonable is it to oppoſe this plan, and to complain of its arrangement, becauſe it coincides not with the ſuggeſtions of ambition and caprice? When men deſpiſe thoſe talents and that rank in life which divine

* Chap. 2.

divine providence has allotted them, and aſpire at others for which they were never deſigned by nature, they aim at ſubverting that equality of obligation which aſſigns particular duties to particular abilities and ſituations, and requires them to be anſwered by others of a different order. For, if every man is at liberty to deſert the poſt aſſigned him, and to invade another's province, how ſhall the inferior ſtations be filled, which are not leſs neceſſary to the general welfare than the more eminent? If, in the circumſtances in which any given number of men can be placed, there be unavoidable hardſhips and inconveniences, why ſhould theſe rather be ſupported by ſuch as have never been accuſtomed to them, and are therefore totally unqualified for their duties, than by thoſe whom birth, education, and habit, have beſt adapted to ſuch ſituations?

Yet,

Yet, unleſs theſe inconveniences be endured, theſe difficulties encountered by ſome, the ſtations in queſtion muſt be deſerted, and a void left in the order of ſociety equally pernicious to public and to private intereſt.

Still, men complain of their ſituation, and eagerly aſpire to others more exalted! But, is there any real foundation for this diſcontent, for this reſtleſs deſire of change? Is it, as people pretend, that their preſent condition is more painful, more adverſe to virtue, more inauſpicious to the developement and exerciſe of their powers, than thoſe which they ſo fondly deſire? Or is it that men are better acquainted with the difficulties and temptations of their preſent ſituation, than with thoſe of any other, have fondly magnified their own abilities, and ignorantly placed

placed all excellence in the diſcharge of the duties of ſuperior ſtations? If we examine the caſe with impartial attention, we ſhall find no reaſon to heſitate in determining the queſtion.

Men readily grant the complaints of thoſe who are placed above them to be ill founded, and aſcribe their diſſatisfaction to their folly. They haſtily preſume that, if they were fixed in their ſituation, they would eaſily ſurmount its difficulties, reſiſt its temptations, and fully diſcharge its duties. Their inferiors pronounce the ſame judgment with regard to them and their circumſtances; and, if they envy, they are envied in their turn. A convincing proof this, that, in every condition, there are advantages as well as difficulties; that, though none is exempted from inconvenience, none is abſolutely inſup-

portable; and that diſcontent with a preſent ſtation, and impatient deſire of a higher, proceed from miſtaken notions of both.

I beg that it may be conſidered that I am, at preſent, ſpeaking only of the different ranks and ſituations of human ſociety, as they are diverſified for the common happineſs of mankind; and not of thoſe ſingular conditions of diſtreſs and miſery, which fall to the lot of individuals. In theſe, patience and fortitude may be recommended as duties and as conſolations; but contentment can hardly be required.

But, in ſurveying the different ſtations of life, although men grant that there are difficulties and hardſhips in all of them, they ſtill believe that theſe diminiſh in

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proportion to the degree of elevation; and fall, with the greateſt weight, on thoſe who occupy the loweſt places. They fondly imagine, that, if they could aſcend to a conſiderable height, they ſhould there find ſome agreeable ſpot, where, unmolleſted and compoſed, they might ſurvey the ſteep which they had climed, and enjoy the delightful proſpect opened around them. But, they reflect not on the difficulty of the aſcent, on the giddineſs of the ſituation, or, if they ſhould chance to ſlip, on the ſeverity of the fall. The preſſure of corporeal wants, the burden of daily labour, and the humiliation of contempt, conſtitute the primary pains of a poor and ignoble condition. It is further deprived of the enjoyments which reſult from the cultivation of reaſon, and of the other nobler faculties of the ſoul, and is conſtrained to toil amidſt the darkneſs of ignorance.

ignorance. If thoſe, to whoſe ſhare it falls, feel for the miſeries of others, they are deſtitute of the means of relieving them, and muſt ſuffer the pangs of compaſſion, without the divine ſatisfaction of benificence. Preſſed with their own diſtreſſes, feeling for thoſe in ſimilar, or in ſtill more afflicting circumſtances, and obſerving the ſuperfluity of the ſons of fortune, they are apt to envy their proſperity, to murmur at the Divine diſpenſations, and to practice violence or fraud, in order to obtain what their ſituation has denied them.

They conſider not, however, that the pleaſures of life depend not ſo much on the externals of condition as on the diſpoſitions of the poſſeſſor; that what ſeems calculated to ſatisfy, and to limit, deſire, ſerves often to inflame and extend it; tha

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the enjoyments which are in men's power are not thoſe which they really taſte; and that to wiſh and to purſue is the unceaſing employment of man upon earth. He who aſcends a mountain, and beholds the view unfolding around him, is fired with greater curioſity to reach the ſummit, whence the utmoſt bounds of the proſpect can be deſcried. In like manner, no moderate exaltation in the ſcale of ſociety can ſatiſfy men, whoſe ambition is kindled, and whoſe activity engaged. Every ſtep becomes only a help to riſe higher; and deſire continues importunate even after its objects are all exhauſted. Alexander is the true emblem of ambition, which is reſtleſs while any thing remains above it; and, when it has reached the ſummit of its deſires, weeps that the progreſs is finiſhed!

Ye who envy fortune and rank, not ſo much for the ſenſual pleaſures, or the indulgences of vanity and pride which they afford, as for the ſublime and elegant enjoyments which they ſeem to offer, in the improvement of knowledge, the cultivation of genius, and the exerciſe of the nobleſt virtues of human nature—ſay if the engagements of public buſineſs, the contentions of ambition, the interruptions of company, the endleſs exactions of ceremony, the allurements of pleaſure, can afford much leiſure for the improvement of the mind, and the cultivation of elegant ſtudies; or that, when the reputation of wiſdom, of learning, or of wit, is acquired without judgment, application, or parts, and flattery amply ſupplies every deficiency, there is any incitement to ſuch noble and pleaſing purſuits? In a low and indigent ſtation, are there greater temptations

tations to diſcontent and envy, than when ſucceſs inflames ambition, and ambition ſpurns every inferior degree? Are the motives ſtronger to cultivate honeſty, and to obſerve the dictates of juſtice, when the ſeverity of puniſhment hangs over the head of the offender, than when concealment is promiſed by intereſt, inquiry removed by intrigue, or impunity ſecured by power? Is there leſs ſympathy with the diſtreſs, or leſs ſincere joy on the proſperity, of others, when men are reminded of their ſufferings by the experience of their own, and depend for ſubſiſtence on their bounty and good opinion—than when luxury removes even the aſpect of want, and opulence ſecures independence? Is there leſs piety and devotion, leſs reverence for God, when men literally implore him for *daily bread*, and depend for its ſupply on the continuance of health,

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and on the fertility of the ſeaſons, than when, having *much goods laid up for many years, they eat, drink, and are merry* *, and the immoderate draughts of plenty render them forgetful of the bountiful hand that beſtows it?

Suppoſing, after all, that the advantages of cultivation and virtue are fully improved by thoſe in the higher ſtations, in what do theſe exceed the ſame advantages of the inferior, ſo as to render them objects of envy, or cauſes of diſcontent? Has not every member of Chriſtian ſociety ſufficient opportunity of acquiring the ſublimeſt and moſt uſeful branches of human knowledge—the origin, the duties, and the deſtination of man—the relation in which he ſtands to his Creator and to his fellow men—the divine nature and perfections

* Luke, xii. 19.

perfections—the gracious plan of ſalvation the Deity has publiſhed to guilty mortals by the mouth of his own Son, and by his inſpired Apoſtles—the glorious proſpects opened to his penitent and amended children beyond the grave, and the gracious means he hath inſtituted for their perfection and felicity? Do not the heavens, the ocean, and the earth, unfold their magnificent and numberleſs beauties to the eye of the peaſant, as well as to that of the monarch; nay, do they not diſcloſe to the former many raviſhing ſcenes, which the latter can ſeldom behold? Are not many even of the moſt ſtriking and admirable diſplays of art, which riches have produced, and continue to ſupport, equally enjoyed by the meaneſt paſſenger, as by the proprietor himſelf? It is a groſs miſtake to ſuppoſe that to provide for one's family, by aſſiduous and honeſt labour, is

leſs meritorious than to ſupply the poor out of an opulent fortune; that patience is leſs commendable than generoſity, reſignation than munificence, meekneſs than moderation, contentment than condeſcenſion; that ſociety is leſs benefited by being furniſhed with the neceſſaries of life than by being adorned with the refinements of art, and by the productions of genius; that the public welfare is leſs promoted by dutiful ſubmiſſion to lawful authority, by an inoffenſive, regular, and ſerviceable, conduct, than by the enaction of ſalutary laws, by the judgment and puniſhment of offenders, and by a zealous and diſintereſted diſcharge of public truſt. God accepts no leſs the artleſs devotion of the grateful, though uninſtructed, heart, than the copious and ſwelling praiſes of the enlightened underſtanding. The coarſer and brawny muſcles are as neceſſary

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to the perfection of the body, as the organs of the moſt delicate texture!

It is thus evident that real happineſs and virtue are not limited to any ſtation, but are equally open to all. If there is any exception to this concluſion, it muſt be in favour of the middling ſpheres of life—in which neither power and opulence tempt to oppreſſion and diſſoluteneſs of manners, nor poverty and ignorance lead to fraud and violence—in which neither pride hardens the ſoul, nor ſervility debaſes it—in which the beſt enjoyments of life are offered, and its greateſt enticements to corruption excluded.

From all that has been ſaid on this ſubject, it clearly appears, that as it is the duty, it is equally the intereſt, of all who are placed in the inferior ranks of life to diſcharge

diſcharge with diligence and aſſiduity the humble offices of their ſtation, to cultivate contentment with their lot, and to ſuppreſs the emotions of envy towards thoſe who are more exalted.

It may indeed be objected, that the deſire of riſing is one of the moſt powerful motives to the honeſt and active diſcharge of every ſocial duty, that one great point of equality among men conſiſts in the opportunity which all ought to enjoy of exerciſing their uſeful or elegant abilities, and that, if every one is to reſt ſatisfied with the condition in which his birth or his circumſtances have placed him, exertion muſt be diſcouraged, and the general welfare be deprived of the benefit which reſults from honeſt and generous ambition. We have, moreover, ſhown above, that frequent exchange of ranks and conditions

ditions ſeems to compoſe a part of the divine adminiſtration of human affairs. If thoſe, therefore, whoſe ſituation is at preſent ignoble and depreſſed, are to conſider it as a duty never to aſpire higher, one of the ſtrongeſt checks is removed from pride, namely, the uncertainty of its elevation, while dejection and poverty are deprived of one of their moſt powerful conſolations—the expectation of more proſperous days.

It ought, however, to be conſidered, that the doctrine above inculcated tends not to preclude laudable ambition and induſtry, but only to ſuppreſs, on the one hand, diſcontent, avarice, and envy, and to remove every pretext for indulging theſe paſſions under the ſpecious colourings of more elevated and generous motives; and, on the other, to comfort and

ſtrengthen

ſtrengthen thoſe who are apt to view their inferior ſtations with an undiſcerning eye, which beholds affliction where happineſs may be found, and degradation where true dignity may reſide. Nay, if our limits admitted of it, it might eaſily be ſhown, that the faithful diſcharge of the duties of an inferior ſtation, and that contented and chearful mind which partakes of its greateſt enjoyments, are the ſureſt and ſafeſt means of advancement. I ſhall ſatisfy myſelf, however, with pointing out, in the following Chapter, ſome important cautions with reſpect to the improvement of our condition.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Cautions to be obſerved in the purſuit of a higher and more flouriſhing Condition.

I. THE deſire of improving one's circumſtances ought never to lead to encroachment on the rights of others, whether natural or acquired. By the violation of the former, the fundamental principles of ſociety are ſubverted; and by that of the latter, the order neceſſary to its exiſtence is deſtroyed. Whoever, therefore, pretends to maintain any of the natural rights of man, by overturning that ſubordination and juſt order which is the ſoul and the life of ſociety, defeats the very purpoſe which he has in view, and exhibits

exhibits either egregious folly or egregious wickedneſs. In either caſe, he becomes a dangerous enemy to the public intereſt, who is to be reſtrained and puniſhed, to prevent him both from injuring others by his practice, and corrupting them by his example. Such, however, is the intemperance of human paſſions, even thoſe of the moſt generous kind, when they are ſtrongly excited, that the ardour of liberty, and indignation at oppreſſion, often hurry men to purſue a conduct directly repugnant to the principles of equity and benificence which they profeſs—to oppreſs others when they are contending for freedom; to be moſt iniquitous in defence of juſtice; and, with a view to promote the welfare of ſociety, to overturn its foundations. Let the times in which we live declare, in many inſtances, the truth of this aſſertion.

II.

II. The duties of the ſtation, which people already occupy, ought to limit their endeavours after advancement. The co-operation of every individual for the public good, muſt firſt diſplay its energy in the ſphere in which he moves, and be thence tranſmitted to the other parts of the ſocial body. By neglecting the duties of his preſent ſtation, a perſon withholds the portion he is appointed to contribute to the general welfare, and, by encroaching on the province of others, may clog their exertion and fruſtrate their utility. To arrive at a more agreeable or more honourable ſtation, the faithful diſcharge of the duties of a preſent one ought always to be the firſt means employed. When theſe are fulfilled, every fair and honeſt exertion is not only lawful, but even highly laudable, as the greateſt activity of the parts then advances more effectually the

proſperity of the whole. By embracing the opportunities which occur, and by exerciſing the talents with which men are endowed, they manifeſt their gratitude to Providence, and they improve its gifts to the greateſt advantage.

III. The duties of any ſtation to which men aſpire, and their own ability to diſcharge them, ought to be conſidered before they attempt to obtain it. For, to occupy a ſtation for which one has no capacity, or with the duties of which he is totally unacquainted, is both to expoſe his own folly, and to injure ſociety, by betraying a truſt which is committed to him. Hence, it is of the utmoſt conſequence to acquire a complete knowledge of our own talents and qualities, which the generality of mankind are ſo apt to magnify, both to their own diſgrace, and

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to the detriment of others. Inability to diſcharge the duties of any ſtation, reſulting whether from narrowneſs of underſtanding, from unhappineſs of temper, or from infirmity of body, ſhould be deemed an expreſs declaration of the Divine will againſt the acquirement of it, and, of conſequence, a boundary not to be paſſed.

IV. Men's exertions to improve their condition ſhould be influenced by the conſideration of the enlargement, or the contraction, of their utility. From the light in which every man appears as a member of human ſociety, to whoſe benefit he is bound to contribute in the moſt ample manner poſſible, it is plain that it can never be lawful for any one to change his preſent ſituation for another, in which his utility muſt be impaired. This is to prefer private to public intereſt, to pervert the

the quality of member, to demand more than is compenſated, and to loſe all that dignity and real enjoyment which reſult from the moſt extenſive beneficence.

If, in the ſtation deſired, men may be equally uſeful, as in that which they occupy, private intereſt may be allowed its full force. If, together with advancement, opportunities of utility increaſe, every private and public conſideration happily unites in ſtimulating to the purſuit of it, and every generous heart will wiſh and applaud the ſucceſs.

Thus, the rights of others, the duties of a preſent ſtation, the talents requiſite for a higher, and the more extenſive utility, are the limits within which men ought to confine their exertions for the improvement of their circumſtances.

Thus,

Thus, juſtice, diligence, ability, and public ſpirit, ſhould be the conſtant attendants in the path of advancement, and the chief forwarders of the progreſs.

But, how little are theſe conſiderations regarded! When intereſt or pleaſure are conſtituted the ſole ſprings of action, every duty that has no tendency to advance their ends is neglected, and offices, inſtituted for the benefit of mankind, are ſhamefully perverted to their prejudice. When the project is formed of riſing to preferment without regard to merit, birth, intereſt, or party-attachments, are the only valid grounds of pretenſion. To the moſt ſelfiſh conſiderations the moſt important intereſts of ſociety are ſacrificed. Before children can diſcover either inclination or capacity, offices are deſigned for them; and kept conſtantly in view; nor

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were this to be cenſured, if proper care were taken to give them a ſuitable education, and their deſtination changed, when their temper and talents were perceived to be incompatible with it. But theſe things are ſeldom much conſidered. Whatever be the genius or improvements of the perſon in queſtion, he muſt move in the particular ſphere which has been choſen for him. The public welfare is treated as a chimera, which it is the buſineſs of a man well ſkilled in the ways of the world to uſe as a colour to varniſh the moſt intereſted deſigns, but which none, but an enthuſiaſtic or vulgar mind, can think of adopting as a real object of purſuit. When the public welfare, however, is obſtructed, private happineſs cannot long be enjoyed. For, as one chief cauſe of the diſorder and corruption, which ſo often lay waſte civil ſociety, is the little attention

attention which is ſhown to adapt men's condition to their abilities and tempers; ſo the miſery of individuals frequently ſprings from the ſame ſource. Men moving in a ſphere for which they were never deſigned by nature, ſoon grow diſguſted with their lot, and, finding the duties of their ſtation irkſome and oppreſſive, either neglect them altogether, to their own irretrievable diſgrace, or continue to diſcharge them, in ſuch a manner as is equally painful to themſelves, and detrimental to others. Thus, Divine Providence takes vengeance on mankind for infringing its appointments, by allowing them to be bewildered in their errors, and the victims of their own infatuation.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Duties of thoſe placed in the higher Ranks of Life, and endowed with diſtinguiſhed Abilities.

IT is certainly no eaſy matter for a perſon not to conſider himſelf as greatly ſuperior to the reſt of his ſpecies, when every one of thoſe who ſurround him pretends that his honour and dignity, his pleaſure and ſervice, are the only objects which occupy himſelf, and ought to occupy every other; when every one applauds, with ſervile adulation, his moſt inſignificant ſayings, and moſt ridiculous actions, and adores him as the ſource of wiſdom, and the centre of power. When

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a perſon has ſo many occaſions of beholding his fellow men in a contemptible light, it muſt require angelic moderation to abſtain from treating them accordingly; to neglect thoſe advantages which his circumſtances and their ſervility put into his hands for gratifying his own paſſions and caprice, at the expence of their moſt valuable intereſts.

When, therefore, I conſider this ſtate of things, far from being ſurpriſed at the pride, and impatience of contradiction, which often characteriſe the higher ranks of life, or any ſpecies of diſtinction and eminence, I am more diſpoſed to admire the condeſcenſion and humanity which they ſo frequently exhibit. For, theſe vices, though more obſervable in the higher ſpheres, becauſe they are diſplayed in a more conſpicuous point of view, are

by no means confined to theſe, but pervade every rank, every ſituation and profeſſion of life. Hardly any attainments ſo low, any circumſtances ſo circumſcribed, as not to afford ſcope for ſelf-ſufficiency and oſtentation. Who will not ſeem great, if he is as highly exalted as his ideas of greatneſs reach, and compares himſelf only with his inferiors; if he eſtimates his own knowledge by another's ignorance, his own wiſdom by another's folly, his own power by another's impotence, his own wealth by another's poverty, his own virtue by another's depravity? On what other foundation, than on this partial mode of compariſon, are built the pride and arrogance of even the moſt exalted of mankind? But, if we abandon this magical glaſs, which transforms the cottage into a palace, and the infant into a man, and contemplate objects in the true

true light of nature, we ſhall find, that the great diſpute only is who ſhall be eſteemed the leaſt ignorant, the leaſt fooliſh, the leaſt weak, the leaſt indigent, the leaſt corrupted; that pride and inſolence, which ſubvert the parity of obligation ſubſiſting among all, ſhould be baniſhed from every human breaſt, and that thoſe who move in the higheſt and moſt illuſtrious ſpheres, having the beſt opportunities of enlarging their minds, ought to regulate their opinions by their own knowledge, not by the ignorance of their inferiors, to acquire real dignity, by diveſting themſelves of paſſions, which are born of ignorance, and nouriſhed by deluſion; and, by moderation, equity, affability, and condeſcenſion, to conciliate benevolence, enſure reſpect, make the rays of virtue eclipſe the ſplendours of fortune, and eſtabliſh a throne which ſhe neither can erect nor overturn.

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Would men, diveſting themſelves, for a moment, of the prejudices which birth, education, or luxurious habits, have fixed in their minds, ſurvey, with the eye of reaſon, the conſtruction of ſociety, the principles on which it reſts, and the ends which it purſues, and then contemplate the nature and perfections of the univerſal parent—what a different light would be thrown on their condition and circumſtances, and how different a proſpect be diſcloſed to them, from that which they have been accuſtomed to behold through the miſts of ignorance, or the twilight of ſelf-deception! Would it be poſſible for them to ſuppoſe that the Deity laviſhes his bounty on individuals capriciouſly elected, merely for their pleaſure and profit, and not with any view to the univerſal benefit; that he has beſtowed on one authority and power, in order that

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he may encroach on the liberties, invade the properties, and overawe the conſciences of his brethren, and not that he may protect innocence, reſtrain oppreſſion, and maintain inviolate the intereſts of juſtice, of religion, and of truth; that, on another, he has conferred wealth and ſuperfluity, only to furniſh him with the means of indulging in luxury, or of wallowing in intemperance, and not to open to him a treaſure for the ſupply of indigence, the relief of diſtreſs, the encouragement of induſtry, and the reward of merit; that he has adorned a third with ſagacity and genius, that he may find an agreeable amuſement for himſelf, gratify his paſſion for admiration, miſlead the judgments, and corrupt the hearts of his fellow men, not that he may enlighten, and improve, and lead them to happineſs, through the path of virtue? Can any man of a ſound

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mind, who allows himſelf a moment's reflection, impute ſuch a ſcheme to infinite goodneſs and wiſdom, or conſider it in any other light than in that of the moſt atrocious rebellion againſt the Divine government?—A perſon, raiſed to a high office, placed in exalted rank, or adorned by diſtinguiſhed abilities, is eſtabliſhed on an eminence that his views of the general good may be more extenſive and correct, and that he may apply, to its advancement, the powers he poſſeſſes with the greater advantage and ſucceſs. As on an eminence, therefore, the eye is diverted from proximate to remoter objects; ſo, in an exalted ſtation, the narrow concerns of ſelf ſhould be leſs regarded than the grand and magnificent range which the public welfare preſents to the mind.

Nor does this view of things diminiſh, in the ſmalleſt degree, the advantages reſulting

ſulting from eminent rank, fortune, or abilities; on the contrary, it greatly enhances them. For, if we exclude the opportunities which theſe afford of widely diffuſing beneficent influence, and, with the imitation of the divine perfections, of ſharing in ſome meaſure the divine felicity; what elſe remains but the meaneſt gratifications of human nature, but an augmentation of miſery with an augmentation of vice, and a total degradation of all that diſtinguiſhes man from the brutes? If the rich enjoy not the pleaſure of munificence, of clothing the naked, of feeding the hungry, of ſupporting the falling family, of rearing the orphan, of ſweetening the cup of ſhame faced uncomplaining poverty, without ruffling the veil that hides her from public view; if the powerful are denied the ſatisfaction of protecting innocence, of reſtraining oppreſſion,

of

of drawing modeſt merit from its retirement, and, by the juſt reward of honour, of rendering it conſpicuous and exemplary, of defending ſubſtantial virtue againſt faction and intrigue, and of promoting the public good by noble and uſeful undertakings; if the wiſe, the ingenious, and the learned, are denied the enjoyment of comforting affliction, of inſtructing ignorance, of directing perplexity, of correcting prejudice, and of reclaiming vice; what remains but the more copious indulgence of ſenſuality—but the gratifications of the moſt ruthleſs paſſions that convulſe the breaſt which they occupy—and the indulgence of the moſt contemptible, though frequently the moſt pernicious, vanity, diſplayed by attempting to ſubvert the grand principles of morality, and to poiſon the divine conſolations of religion? Is there in theſe any thing which

a man of judgment would value, deſire, and purſue, as primary objects? Were ſuch a perſon informed, on his firſt ſetting out in life, that ſuch would be all the enjoyment he ſhould reap from the fondeſt objects of his purſuit—would he conſider the purchaſe as a ſufficient recompenſe for his toil and anxiety, his frequent mortifications, and aſſiduous ſtudy? I aſſert not that the man, who devotes wholly to ſelfiſh purpoſes the advantages he poſſeſſes, has no pleaſure, no enjoyment. The ſenſualiſt, the miſer, the vain, the ambitious, the proud, have each their particular gratifications. But theſe gratifications are unmanly and baſe, and fall infinitely ſhort of the delights of a faithful diſcharge of duty, and of the ſublime enjoyments of beneficence. Nor can it be alledged that enjoyments being matters of taſte, it is impoſſible to aſcertain their comparative

values; becauſe every man will be partial to his own, and, while the generous extol the joys of beneficence, the ſelfiſh will ever find their happineſs in thoſe which center in themſelves. For, in order to compare the different ſources of felicity, it is neceſſary to taſte them; and this can only be done by men of an exalted and capacious ſoul, who can reliſh in the higheſt degree both the pleaſures which attach to ſelf, and thoſe which reſult from benevolence. By feeding the hungry, does any man ſpoil his own appetite? By relieving the diſtreſſed, does he diminiſh his own reliſh of eaſy circumſtances? By maintaining peace and order in ſociety, does he contract his imagination, or diminiſh its powers? By comforting the afflicted, by inſtructing the ignorant, or by adviſing the perplexed, does he render his conception leſs clear, his judgment leſs

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ſolid, or his memory leſs tenacious? On the other hand, it is certain that a contracted ſelfiſhneſs weakens and extinguiſhes the benevolent affections, and excludes the pleaſures they confer. The man who ſeeks in wealth only the means of indulging his ſenſuality, and promoting his convenience, who aſpires at power, only to gratify his pride and ambition, or who purſues knowledge only for his own amuſement or vanity—ſuch a man can have but little reliſh of the joys that ſpring up and flouriſh in a ſocial and benevolent heart *.

What is it that, in all the actions, and all the characters, whether preſented by daily obſervation, recorded in hiſtory, or figured

* Hence Ariſtotle very juſtly aſſerts, in ſeveral places of his Ethical writings, that the good man is the only proper judge of happineſs.

figured by imagination, excites admiration, and engages eſteem? Is it merely extent of capacity, ſuperiority of ſtation, or largeneſs of fortune; or is it liberality of ſentiment, and kindneſs of heart? Place the faithful friend, the affectionate parent, the indulgent maſter, the generous patron, the incorrupt magiſtrate, the genuine patriot, in the moſt diſadvantageous circumſtances; let him be ſunk in poverty, overwhelmed with diſgrace, tortured with pain, he will ſtill preſerve his dignity, and command our reſpect! Nay, the leſs he enjoys of the advantages, and the more he ſuffers of the evils, of life, the more glorious will he appear! But no favourable concurrence of circumſtances, neither the gifts of nature, the accompliſhments of art, nor the ſplendours of fortune will ever be able to bribe our eſteem in behalf, I ſay, not of the ſenſualiſt, the villain,

lain, or the tyrant, but even of the unſocial ſolitary mortal, who, though he offers no poſitive injury to his ſpecies, yet with holds his endeavours for their happineſs! Nay, if ſuch a ſuppoſition be not impious, remove goodneſs from all the other divine attributes, and ſuppoſe the Supreme Being unconcerned for the happineſs of his creation, and ſay whether his nature would then appear as amiable, adorable, and tranſcendently excellent, as it now appears to every reflecting mind. And if goodneſs conſtitute the ſupreme glory of the divine nature, that which gives to every other perfection its true beauty and light, and completes the real character of Deity—is it poſſible that any human excellence or advantage ſhould compenſate for the abſence of this primary virtue?

If

If the true excellence of human nature, thus, conſiſts in benignity, if this neceſſarily attracts the regard of the ſelfiſh themſelves, how comes it to paſs that ſo many, who have the nobleſt opportunities of gratifying a diſpoſition ſo beatific and glorious, can be reconciled to a contrary conduct—to ſenſuality, oppreſſion, and perverſion of the fineſt abilities? The weakneſs, the blindneſs, and the corruption of human nature, are the only ſatisfactory cauſes that can be alledged.

But, even in actions the moſt apparently ſelfiſh and groveling, a diſcerning eye will be able to diſcover ſome faint gleams of generoſity which illumine and recommend them. Senſuality is clothed with the ſpecious colouring of ſociality, of pleaſure communicated as well as received, of jocularity and mirth, of freedom, and contempt

contempt of ſervile reſtraint. Oppreſſion and tyranny are preſented to the mind under the appearance of dignity, of a high ſenſe of honour, a noble ambition, attachment to party, nay, even of a love of juſtice. Without theſe fictitious images, the ſenſualiſt would appear to himſelf as the moſt contemptible, and the oppreſſor as the moſt odious, of mankind.

But, why multiply arguments in a matter where a moment's feeling is more deciſive than an age of reaſoning? Had you ever a faithful friend, into whoſe boſom you poured all the ſecrets of your heart—a parent, whoſe burden of years you lightened, whoſe tottering limbs you ſupported—a child, whoſe aſſiduous duty, whoſe budding virtues, ſweetened all your cares of the preſent, and brightened all your hopes of the future—did ever the ſympathetic

thetic guſh ſtart in your eye at the ſight of miſery—did ever your hands ſtretch forth the unexpected relief, and diſpel the gloom that hangs on the brow of woe, as the ſun, burſting through the clouds, renews the face of nature—did you ever diſcharge an important truſt with dignity, diſintereſtedneſs, and honour, and ſpread peace and joy among your fellow men, while *the ear when it heard you bleſſed you, and the eye when it ſaw you gave witneſs to you* *—ſay what delight theſe recollections afford—would you exchange them for a life-time of the moſt refined ſenſuality—for Peruvian treaſures—or Aſiatic power?

It appears, then, that the dignity of human nature conſiſts not in the greatneſs of men's abilities, wealth, or dominion, but

* Job, xxix. 11.

but in expanſion, and benignity of ſoul; that the former are only means of promoting the purpoſes of the latter, and ſigns that their poſſeſſors are particularly called, by Divine appointment, to generous and elevated action; that one, who poſſeſſes all theſe advantages, may be more contemptible than thoſe, who, though devoid of them, have the heart which could apply them to their proper ends; and that one firm purpoſe of doing good will adorn a character more than the acuteſt underſtanding, the moſt opulent fortune, or the moſt exalted rank, unaccompanied with a virtuous diſpoſition. Hence, to be filled with pride and contempt of thoſe below us, on account of our talents, or external circumſtances, without any regard to the right application of them, is both to act unjuſtly, by acting inconſiſtently with the character of members of the community,

and uſurping the rights which belong to it alone, and to overturn the baſis on which true ſuperiority muſt ever reſt. It is to content ourſelves with the ſhadow, without the ſubſtance, of greatneſs; and, while God and men unite in calling us to a pre-eminence and happineſs which neither time, nor fortune, nor death, can remove, to deſcend to the moſt contemptible of all conditions, by perverting the moſt ſplendid powers, and the richeſt opportunities—to embrace the hideous form of miſery while celeſtial felicity courts us—to change a fertile field into a barren heath—to dwell in a dungeon while we may walk in the moſt reſplendent day. In a word, it is the duty of thoſe who are raiſed to the higher ſtations of life, poſſeſſed of the gifts of fortune, or endowed with ſuperior abilities—to maintain juſtice, order, and peace, in ſociety; to ſtudy and

purſue

purſue the public good; to relieve diſtreſs, to encourage induſtry, to reward merit, to exerciſe condeſcenſion and affability towards their inferiors; to cultivate and extend uſeful and elegant knowledge; to eſtabliſh, and inculcate, the grand principles of morality and religion, to enlighten, humaniſe, and improve mankind, and to lead them to virtue and happineſs.

Thoſe who employ in this manner the opportunities and talents with which they are furniſhed by Divine Providence, are entitled to the higheſt veneration of mankind. It is, then, that nobility, illuſtrious ſtation, or diſtinguiſhed parts, appear in their full ſplendour, and exhibit their poſſeſſors as a ſpecies of divinities upon earth, who, bearing the reſemblance of God as far as human nature will permit, ſhare alſo his felicity, and claim the homage of

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the world. Let them be diſplayed as the inſtruments of beneficence, they will reign with an irreſiſtible and permanent dominion, which neither envy, nor malice, nor faction, nor tumult, will be able to overturn; for it is founded in the hearts of men who, feeling, and rejoicing in, its bliſsful influences, muſt ceaſe to love themſelves, before they can wiſh to withdraw their reſpect and obedience.

But, when riches are only the fund of a ſordid avarice, or the fountain of licentiouſneſs and profligacy; when wiſdom is perverted into craft, and abilities tranſformed into the miniſters of cabal and intrigue, of deception and ignoble policy, eſtabliſh, uphold, or extend, civil or religious deſpotiſm; when reſplendent genius is employed in rebellion againſt God, and in the corruption of men, by propagating irreligion

irreligion and immorality; when pre-eminence and authority are, in civil life, uſed as the inſtruments of pride, injuſtice, oppreſſion, and cruelty, or ſupreme power, impelled by inſatiable ambition, deluges the earth with blood, and ſpreads devaſtation and miſery through the habitations of men—reaſon eaſily penetrates the falſe glitter that ſurrounds them, and perceives their deformity and blackneſs. She declares their luſtre to reſemble that of thoſe noxious vapours, which, riſing from the earth, are kindled into a flaſh in the ſky, and terminate in noiſe and deſtruction; while thoſe who apply their talents, their riches, or power, to the beneficent ends for which they are deſtined, are like that glorious luminary in the heavens, which ſhines with a conſtant and ſalutary light.

Thou proud inſolent mortal! who look-eſt down from thy lofty ſtation on thy brethren

brethren of men, and imagineſt them only formed to bring their gifts to thy altar, and to bend before thee with ſervile homage, know that thy elevation only renders thee more conſpicuouſly contemptible! Conſider that, ſhould thoſe, whom thou ſo inſolently deſpiſeſt, adopt thy principles, and burſt the bands of ſocial union by which alone they are made thy dependents, the power is theirs, and thine only the ſhadow and the phantom. Should they only withdraw their ſupport without inflicting any poſitive evil, thou wouldſt precipitately ſink into a degradation lower than that of the meaneſt labourer. Leſs inured to want, thou wouldſt be leſs able to provide for its ſupply, and have leſs reaſon to expect it from the benignity of others. Conſider that, even in thy preſent elevation, thou art really more dependent than the moſt ignoble of the ſons

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of men. If he is leaſt dependent who ſtands leaſt in need of others, he is ſurely moſt dependent who ſtands moſt in need of them. With our rank, our neceſſities, our demands, our cares, increaſe. The links by which we are joined to our fellow men are multiplied, and the very circumſtance which enlarges our influence diminiſhes our internal ſtrength. He, therefore, who has the greateſt number of dependents, has only the greateſt number of thoſe to whom he is indebted for conſideration and power. The more lofty and ſpacious the edifice is, with the greater precipitation, if its pillars are ſapped, does it ruſh into ruin. Learn then to ſeek thy importance and dignity, where only thou wilt find them, by diſcharging every duty which thy ſtation requires, and by diffuſing, by thy affability and beneficence, happineſs among mankind. Relinquiſhing

linquiſhing the phantoms of pride enjoy the ſubſtantial pre-eminence of virtue.

But ye! who employ your diſtinguiſhed abilities, or exalted power, for the purpoſes for which providence has beſtowed them, fear not that any portion of that reſpect, obedience, and honour, to which you are entitled, will be withdrawn. Goodneſs, moving in an elevated ſphere, and guided by diſtinguiſhed wiſdom, ſhines with ſuch an amiable luſtre, poſſeſſes ſuch a commanding influence, and is ſo irreſiſtibly attractive, that ſhe reigns over the hearts of men, and is often conſtrained to bluſh at the homage ſhe receives, becauſe it approaches adoration. Power may intimidate, ſplendour may dazzle, genius may ſurpriſe and delight, but goodneſs alone can captivate the heart!

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Duties common to all with regard to the Uſe of their Opportunities and Talents.

WHOEVER attentively examines the human conſtitution will diſcover in it ſeveral inconſiſtencies not ſo eaſily accounted for. Thus, mankind have a ſtrong propenſity to ſociety, and are miſerable without it; yet in ſociety they are prone to indulge the moſt unſocial diſpoſitions. Nature conſtantly draws them to their ſpecies, and points out their ſweeteſt enjoyments, as ſolely deriveable from this ſource; yet the ſelfiſh part of our frame, counteracting this dictate of nature, corrupts the grand ſtreams of happineſs, by turning them into its own channel, and,

inſtead of allowing the individual to act as a member of the ſocial body, and to receive from this capacity his higheſt dignity and enjoyment, endeavours to render ſociety ſubſervient to the individual. There is in all men a wonderful fondneſs of independence, and a no leſs ſurpriſing deſire of the ſervice and reſpect of others. This is, in fact, to join the greateſt contradictions, to force into union things abſolutely incompatible; for independence can only be ſecured, by an entire ſeparation from mankind, by relinquiſhing every claim to their good offices and regards, by renouncing every ſocial enjoyment, and by deriving happineſs from the ſtores of ſelf. As ſoon as man enters into the ſocial circle, and ſhares its beneficial influences, he relinquiſhes his ſeparate exiſtence, and, forming a part of a ſyſtem, is limited by the relations which he bears

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to the other parts, and to the whole, becomes bound to contribute to their ſupport and perfection, according to the ſupport and benefit which he receives from them, and is required to exert a beneficial activity proportioned to the influence he poſſeſſes. Whoever with-holds from the general good any portion of uſeful effort he is able to beſtow, is unfaithful to the conditions, on which he enjoys the benefits of ſociety, and violates that equality of obligation which ſubſiſts among all mankind. He alſo fruſtrates, as far as lies in his power, that plan of divine wiſdom, whereby the general felicity is intended. For it is certain that the Univerſal Parent has diſtributed among men ſuch a portion of abilities and powers, as, duly cultivated and improved, would render the condition of all comfortable, in every reſpect, and happy. In the preſent

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ſtate of ſociety, ſome are, indeed, over-burthened with labour, and enjoy but a ſmall degree of convenience; while others loiter in indolence, and conſume the fruits of induſtry. This, however, could never be the caſe, did every one cultivate with diligence his peculiar talents, and diſcharge the duties of his peculiar ſtation. It is the neglect of this alone that makes it neceſſary to overload ſome, in order to ſupport that part of the common burden, from which others have treacherouſly withdrawn themſelves.

Hence the principle of *equality*, above illuſtrated, requires not only that all men ſhould religiouſly regard the rights of others, but that they ſhould exert themſelves, to the utmoſt of their ability, for the common benefit. Whoever rejects this requiſition deſcends below the rank of

of a member of ſociety, and, inſtead of riſing, as is fooliſhly ſuppoſed, above the reſt of mankind, by a life of idleneſs and diſſipation, degrades himſelf to the condition of a beggar, who lives on the labour of others, without making any juſt return for it. For, however ſtrange it may ſound, it is undoubted that ſociety has a right to the beſt exertion of all its members, of the higheſt as well as of the loweſt, of the moſt opulent as well as of the pooreſt, for the common good.

The queſtion is not, what advantage every individual is content to reap from his own powers and opportunities, but what degree of general utility he can effectuate. Theſe powers have not been beſtowed on him, by their divine author, ſolely for his own uſe, but chiefly for the benefit of the human race, to whoſe happineſs

pineſs he is deſtined to contribute. This proper exerciſe of the powers of every individual all the other members of ſociety have a right to demand, on fair and equal terms. The equivalent every individual obtains by the advantages and comforts which he receives from ſocial life, and ſtill more by that ſuperfluity which enables any one to live in ſloth. He is a debtor to the grand community of mankind, and his creditors can call him to repay.

It is true that, ſince it is ſo difficult to determine the extent of every one's capacity, and the exact meaſure of the ſocial advantages he enjoys, no preciſe claim can be eſtabliſhed in every particular caſe. But, the general obligation remains equally ſtrong on all, and none can wilfully violate it without incurring the blame of his own mind, and the diſpleaſure of the author

author of his exiſtence. The principle, therefore, on which ſome ancient legiſlators prohibited any citizen, of whatever condition or rank, from living in idleneſs, was perfectly juſt in itſelf, although the execution of any law grounded upon it muſt ever be extremely difficult, and might occaſion greater inconveniences than thoſe which it ſhould be intended to obviate.

As indolence, and the neglect of opportunities of utility, are highly unjuſt, ſo they are extremely contemptible. For, what character can be more the object of contempt, than that of a perſon who, tho' endowed with active powers, and furniſhed with ample opportunities of benefiting that particular ſociety to which he belongs, and from which he receives conſtant defence and protection, yet lives on the

the labour either of his predeceſſors or contemporaries, without teſtifying any approbation of their induſtry, by which he ſubſiſts, or making any efforts to imitate their laudable example? What can degrade a man more in his own eyes, than the conſideration that he has done nothing to benefit his friends, to oblige his neighbours, to educate and eſtabliſh his children, or to promote the intereſt and honour of his country; that he has buried his talents, defeated the end of providence in beſtowing them, and that, when he is cut off by death, the world will be delivered from an unneceſſary burden, from a putrid excreſſence?

On the other hand, what can convey, to any perſon, a higher idea of his own worth and importance, than the reflection that, though but an individual endowed with

with one claſs of abilities, yet, by their improvement, he not only enlarges his own enjoyments, but diffuſes around him the moſt joyous influences, and promotes the welfare of the whole human race; that, though retired from public view, he appears in the uſeful productions of his application and genius; that, though infirm in body, he renders, by his inventions, the labour of the ſtrong and hardy both more eaſy to themſelves, and more beneficial to others; and that, though devoid of public authority, he ſtrengthens the political union, and advances public order by the juſt principles which he eſtabliſhes and elucidates; that, taking another view of the caſe, though ignorant and illiterate, yet he contributes, by his toil and dexterity, to the inſtruction and improvement of mankind, while he provides ſuſtenance and leiſure for thoſe who

are endowed with genius and learning, or placed in thoſe ſtations where plans of general welfare can be beſt conceived, and propoſed with the greateſt proſpects of ſucceſs? In fine, it is an exalting conſideration, that, however obſcure a perſon is in himſelf, he is an inſtrument in the hand of providence for communicating to mankind, not only the neceſſaries of life, but alſo its higheſt ornaments and delights, and even of raiſing their views above this terreſtrial abode, and directing them to a ſtate of endleſs felicity, the certainty of which cannot fail to produce the moſt ſalutary effects on every part of their conduct. No perſon is ſo mean and inſignificant, as not to affect ſome part of the community. In a grand piece of machinery, the ſmaller wheels and pins, tho' leſs obſervable, are not on that account leſs neceſſary than others to the juſt motion

tion and effect of the whole. In like manner, the conduct of the inferior members of ſociety not only affects their own happineſs, or that of their immediate connections, but diffuſes its influence, though in a leſs perceptible manner than that of the higher ranks, through the whole ſocial body. Nay, I may aſſert that, as theſe compoſe the greater part of the community, their uſeful induſtry is ſtill more requiſite to the general happineſs, and that the meaneſt labourer, who diligently and honeſtly exerts himſelf in his ſphere, is entitled to ſhare, with the moſt exalted of the ſons of men, the glorious appellation of the friend of mankind, and of the approved of God! Should any whom fortune depreſſes, or inſolence laughs to ſcorn, but whoſe ſoul, riſing above his ſituation, feels the intrinſic dignity of man, and laments the narrowneſs of his terreſtrial

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ſphere, caſt his eye on theſe pages, let him be comforted and ſtrengthened by the reflections above mentioned. There is ſomething in the idea that exalts the mind, that kindles the deſire of uſefulneſs, that rouſes activity, and puts every faculty in motion. When we conſider it, we ſeem deſirous of breaking the inglorious chains of indolence, and pant for ſome worthy object, ſome important purſuit, to exerciſe the generous energies of the ſoul!

If the conſideration of the importance of the meaneſt member of ſociety ſhould prove a ſtrong argument to uſeful diligence, how much greater force muſt this argument acquire with regard to thoſe whom fortune and rank particularly diſtinguiſh. Their influence, whether good or bad, is very extenſive. Firſt communicated to numerous connections and dependents,

pendents, it is conveyed through them to other contiguous relations, till it reach at laſt the extremities of the ſocial ſyſtem. Were this influence always of a beneficial nature, ſociety would feel its ſalutary effects through all its frame, and, inſtead of that diſtempered and deformed face which it ſo frequently wears, would aſſume the moſt healthy and ſmiling aſpect. The face of nature, long hid in fog, or ravaged by tempeſts, receives not a more delightful transformation from the returning ſun, than ſociety would receive from thoſe benignant lights which thus illumined and invigorated it.

In what light, then, muſt thoſe perſons appear, who, becauſe their external circumſtances free them from the neceſſity of labouring for their ſubſiſtence, imagine themſelves exempted from every ſpecies

of

of uſeful exertion; who, becauſe they are provided with the abundant ſupply of every corporeal want, think themſelves under no obligation to improve their minds, or to engage in any purſuit conducive to the common welfare; who either yawn away their time in the moſt lethargic indolence, or devote it to the moſt inſignificant, frivolous, or vicious enjoyments; who waſte ingenuity in mere oſtentation, degrade reaſon to purvey for appetite, and make recreation their ſtudy, and amuſement their buſineſs—in a word, whoſe whole life is either a blank, or a perverſion of exiſtence. The phantom of pleaſure, like an *ignis fatuus*, inſtantly diſappears, when they think they can ſeize it. The ſame inſipid round is run over a thouſand times. The ſenſes are jaded, the appetites cloyed. Tired at laſt with the tedious purſuit, thoſe votaries of pleaſure, like the

the top that has long been laſhed, doſe in the arms of indolence. When they wake at times from their inſenſibility, their minds are haunted with all the chimeras, all the monſters of vapour and ſpleen, which often drive them to burſt, by death, the ponderous fetters with which they are loaded.

I will not aſſert, that all who live in this manner are ſenſible of the criminality of their conduct, and perceive that, however averſe from injuſtice, breach of truſt, and cruelty in their dealings with particular perſons, they yet involve themſelves, by this negative vice, this neglect of the due improvement of their talents and opportunities in theſe crimes with reſpect to their ſpecies in general. No; I am convinced that, if they clearly perceived the tendency of their conduct, many of them,

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at leaſt, would review it with ſorrow and diſguſt. Ignorance, and wrong habits contracted in early life, more than any vicious diſpoſition, are the cauſes of a courſe of action ſo diſgraceful and unhappy to themſelves, and ſo detrimental to ſociety.

This reflection, however, if it diminiſh their criminality, augments the folly of neglecting to cultivate thoſe rational faculties, which would afford them juſt notions of their duty, and diſcloſe an elevated region of purſuit and happineſs. For, if they rightly apprehended the relation in which all the members of ſociety ſtand to each other, they would perceive that it is not only the rapacious invader, or the ſecret purloiner, of property, who muſt be reputed injurious, but alſo the indolent and the diſſipated, who deprives his

fellow

fellow men of any benefit which he is called to beſtow. They would ſee, that they are under obligations, not only to abſtain from poſitive violations of juſtice, but alſo to diſcharge many duties of diſtinguiſhed utility to mankind. To theſe they would acknowledge themſelves particularly called by the appointment of heaven. Relieved from the neceſſity of providing for their corporeal wants, their minds are furniſhed with greater freedom for the exerciſe of its nobler powers, and with a more extenſive range for the diſcovery and proſecution of ſchemes of public good. And as thoſe clouds that obſcure their underſtanding began to remove, an hundred untaſted ſprings of felicity would open on their hearts. For, if every perſon of fortune and rank employed his moſt active endeavours to excite and maintain a ſpirit of induſtry and virtue among his

dependents, his neighbours, and fellow citizens, he would find his time and attention ſo happily engaged, that he would ſurvey with contempt his former pleaſures; he would ſeem to breath a purer air, and to live in a region of perpetual ſunſhine, while the vapours of low ambition and of ſenſual indulgence rolled below his feet!

Man can only be happy in as far as his powers are duly exerciſed; and thoſe powers, which are the moſt elevated and capacious, afford the greateſt ſum of felicity. The ſame means, therefore, which render any man moſt highly beneficial to others, alſo increaſe the ſum of his own enjoyments, and ſuperadd to them that moſt delightful of all ſatisfactions—the conſciouſneſs of having diſcharged, to the utmoſt of his power, his duty as a member of the community, and fulfilled the intention

intention of his Creator in ſending him into the world. The neglect of the due improvement of any power, or of any opportunity of honourable action, detracts juſt ſo much from perſonal enjoyment. As want of circulation corrupts the air, and ſtagnation the water, ſo, indolence ſuperinduces a torpor on the mind, which unfits it even for the more refined pleaſures of ſenſe, and deprives it of that great ſweetener of every enjoyment, the reflexion that it is the produce of our own exertions, and the natural recompenſe of merit. With regard to diſtinction, acquired by ſucceſsful exertions of abilities, it is certain, that the ſame obligation which demanded the firſt diſplay of them, requires their continuance while any benefit can thence reſult to mankind, and their poſſeſſors are able to confer it. He who has already exerted powers, by which the

aggregate

aggregate of common good has been increaſed, has pledged himſelf to a courſe of diſtinguiſhed utility, and, if he relaxes or ceaſes his efforts, while his faculties are ſtill vigorous, is more culpable than if he had never entered on the honourable carreer; becauſe practice procures facility, and ſucceſs ſhould animate to freſh enterpriſe. If ſelfiſh ambition ſhould, as is in this caſe moſt probable, be the ſole motive to action, let it be conſidered, that it is perhaps more difficult to preſerve than to purchaſe reputation and homage. The enſigns of honour attract the public eye; elevation places men in a more conſpicuous light, where every defect, as well as every virtue, is more clearly diſcerned, and more nicely ſcrutiniſed. If thoſe, therefore, who are thus diſtinguiſhed, are not able to ſupport their ſituation with dignity, their diſgrace will, from the diſ-

appointed

appointed expectations of mankind, be more humiliating, and the contempt which they incur more general. Envy will magnify every fault, annihilate every virtue, and laſh them with the laurels which ſhe has torn from their brows. Happy for themſelves, and happy for the world, whoſe intereſts are always hurt by the degradation of merit, if they had never riſen above the vulgar level!

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Concluſion.

THE view of ſociety, and of the principles on which it is founded, diſcloſed in this Eſſay, evinces the obligation of all its members, of whatever rank or deſcription, to contribute their moſt active and honeſt endeavours for the common good. Indeed this obligation is ſufficiently inculcated on the lower claſſes, by the neceſſity of labouring for their daily ſubſiſtence, and by the dreadful conſequences which idleneſs produces to them and their families. With regard to theſe, it is, therefore, leſs neceſſary to unfold the full force of this obligation, than with reſpect to thoſe whoſe eaſy circumſtances, ſeeming

ing to render them independent of their fellow men, ſeem alſo to exempt them from every debt beyond the limits of ſtrict juſtice. This independence we have ſhown to be purely imaginary, and utterly incompatible with the principles of ſocial union. The chain of dependence runs equally through all the orders of ſociety, and binds every individual in theſe orders. While it excludes the extravagant claims of ſelf love, and ſubjects men to more generous and ſalutary principles, it eſtabliſhes at the ſame time a ſyſtem which, if univerſally obſerved, would fully ſecure the moſt eſſential intereſts of each individual, by ſettling them on the broad and immoveable baſis of general welfare. For, did the rich employ their wealth to ſupply the wants of the poor; the poor, their labour to adminiſter to the eaſe and convenience of the rich; the great, their

power

power and authority to protect the weak and defenceleſs; the wiſe, the ingenious, and the learned, their abilities to inſtruct and counſel the ignorant and illiterate; did every one, in ſhort, impart to his fellow men a portion of the fruits of his talents and advantages; it is impoſſible that any ſhould repine at another's poſſeſſing what was employed for his own benefit, nay, was made more ſubſervient to his uſe, than if he himſelf were the proprietor. For no individual could ſo perfectly cultivate all the different talents, neceſſary for his ſupport and welfare, which are diſtributed among the ſpecies, and, while ſome particular one is allotted to each, are all carried to the higheſt improvement of which they are ſuſceptible.

Thus, the principles of equality which we have eſtabliſhed, at the ſame time that they

they repreſs the inſolence of pride, the outrages of oppreſſion, and the diſſipation of ſenſuality, confirm, nevertheleſs, the neceſſity of ſubordination, and the juſt demands of lawful authority. They maintain inviolate every natural and every civil diſtinction, draw more cloſely every ſocial tie, and unite all in one harmonious and juſtly proportioned ſyſtem, which brings men together on the even ground of the inherent rights of human nature, of reciprocal obligation, and of a common relation to the community. Yet, for the maintenance of this equality itſelf, they ſeparate them into different claſſes, and inveſt them with different capacities and offices. Thus, are the poor and the mean reconciled to their circumſtances, or comforted under them; the opulent and the powerful are excited to beneficence and condeſcenſion; the ingenious and acute

are directed to the beſt uſe of their abilities; and all are linked together by the powerful ties of common intereſts, and of reciprocal duty. Happy thoſe, whoſe ſouls are capable of riſing to ſuch enlarged views of things, and are animated by them to a conduct worthy of human nature, worthy of Chriſtianity, which repreſents men to each other as children of one parent, as members of one family, as journeying together, through the checkered ſcenes of this tranſitory world, towards a region where all the diſtinctions of poverty and riches, of obſcurity and ſplendour, of power and meanneſs, ſhall ceaſe, every inequality diſappear; where virtue alone ſhall be exalted, and vice degraded forever!

It muſt, indeed, be acknowledged, that this theory is too pure and exalted to admit

mit of a complete conformity of practice. But man is qualified for endleſs improvements in knowledge and virtue, and the happineſs which he attains will exactly correſpond to the degrees of his progreſs. In every art and ſcience there is an ideal model which can never be reached even by the moſt exact and beautiful execution. What Cicero obſerves with regard to a perfect orator, that he had never ſeen any ſpeaker that could come up to his notions of eloquence, is not limited to that art, but is equally applicable to every other. It is, however, to be obſerved, that even the excellence which is attained is wholly referable to the perfect ſtandard previouſly exiſting in the artiſts mind. In proportion, therefore, as clear and elevated ideas of excellence are entertained in religion, in morality, and in politics, and action is directed by theſe, human

conduct

conduct and happineſs will be improved and exalted. If, on the other hand, low and grovelling ſtandards are adopted, and principles are regulated by eſtabliſhed practice, not practice reformed by the genuine principles of nature, mankind will continue to tread in the old and muddy path, and the progreſs of the world will be marked with degeneracy and degradation.

It is the conſtant objection of thoſe, who are either averſe from improvement, or too indolent and too timid to begin or advance it, that the perfection aimed at is too high for human nature. They thus employ the exiſtence of abuſes and errors as a reaſon for perpetuating them. But, if the ſame reaſoning had always been conſidered as juſt, mankind would, at this day, dwell in caves, feed upon acorns, fall down

down before the works of their own hands, and be bound in the heavy chain of Heathen ignorance and ſuperſtition. The inſtitutions and refinements of civil ſociety muſt appear to a ſavage as extravagant and impracticable, as the fineſt theory of moral ſentiment and action appears to thoſe whoſe ſouls are immerſed in ſenſuality, or fettered by ſelf-intereſt. The queſtion is not, what is the preſent practice of mankind, but what they are qualified ultimately to attain; not how far any theory is conformable to the preſent ſtate of things, but how far it is founded in nature, adapted to the human faculties, and conducive to human felicity.

If the principles illuſtrated in this Eſſay ſhould be devoid of every other recommendation, they have, at leaſt, that which is no inconſiderable one, of being con-

conformable to the doctrines of Chriſtianity *. For, although ſome philoſophers, who have pretended great zeal for the rights and the happineſs of mankind, have manifeſted, at the ſame time, a ſtrange antipathy to every kind of religion, and particularly to the Chriſtian, it will be found, by every impartial inquirer, that the religion of Jeſus Chriſt inculcates and ſanctions every principle on which public and private happineſs can be built. It is true that Chriſtianity has frequently been moſt ſhamefully corrupted, and, in that corrupted form, produced the moſt dreadful calamities. But, to explode Chriſtianity on this account, is juſt as ſenſible as to forbid mankind the uſe of water, air, or fire, becauſe theſe elements have often been the vehicles of deſtruction. Whoever attempts

* Romans, xii. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 1ſt Cor. xii.

tempts to erect any ſyſtem of policy to the excluſion of religion, betrays great ignorance of human nature, and great indifference for human happineſs. Man is a religious creature, and is drawn to his Creator by all the principles of his conſtitution—by the ſenſe of his imbecillity, by conſcience, by gratitude and admiration, and by his reaſon when duly improved. The grand requiſite, then, is to procure for him a religion pure, ſimple, beneficent, and conſolotary. This will be found only in the religion of Jeſus Chriſt, as it is exhibited in the ſacred writings. Here the moſt perfect ſtandard of duty is erected, in order to engage man to an endleſs progreſs in virtue; a ſufficient remedy is provided for his deviations from it, when accompanied with penitence; the moſt glorious rewards are offered to his perſevering endeavours; and the ſtrongeſt

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succours are provided for his weakneſs. Such a religion powerfully ſtrengthens every ſocial and civil obligation, and prepares men for heaven, by rendering them uſeful on earth.

FINIS.